

THE FROZEN FORTUNE BEGINS IN
THIS ISSUE

THE ARGOSY

FOR JUNE



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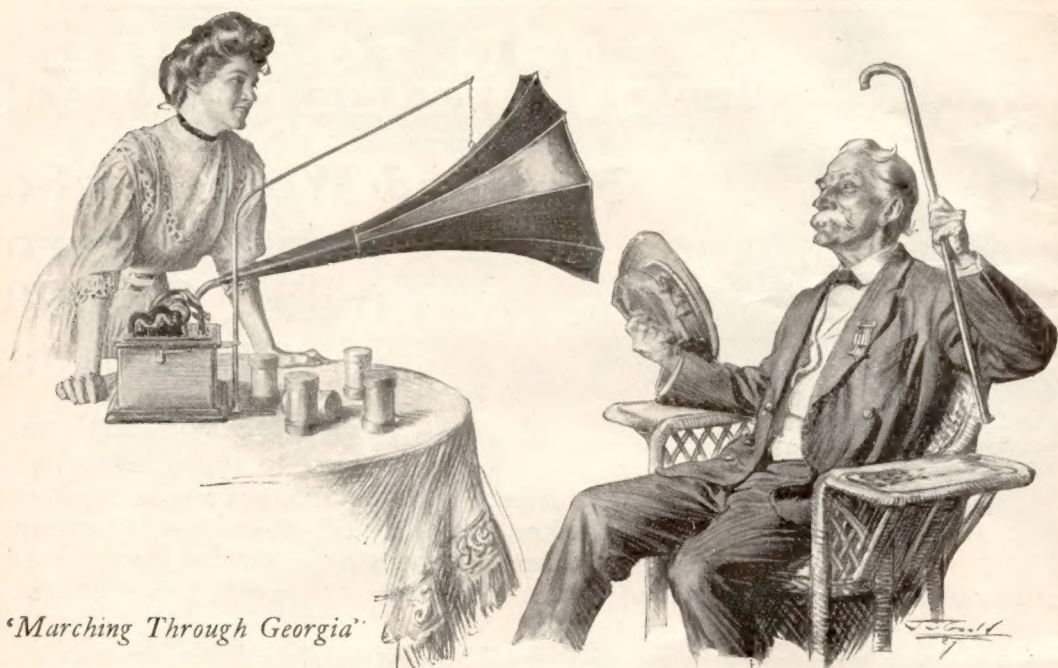
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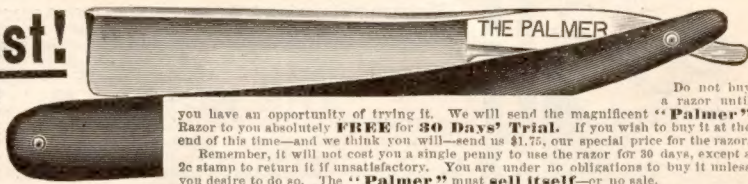
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UP AGAINST IT.

By MARTIN CROSS.

How one man went from bad to worse in the effort to keep up appearances till a remittance arrived, and even then didn't get it.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT.

AS Mr. Horner turned away from the open window, he heard a distant clock strike three. The sun was shining bravely outside, but the fact brought no cheer to his heart.

He turned back to the window, which he had opened for the purpose of letting in fresh air, and pulled down the sliding frame. Then he walked quietly over and tried the door. It was locked. He began to move about in an unconsciously furtive manner.

First he opened one of the drawers of the bureau, inspected the things which lay in it, and finally took out a suit of blue serge, which he laid carefully in the open suit-case resting on a chair near by. Next he tiptoed over to the trunk in the corner.

It was unlocked, and as noiselessly as possible he raised the lid, with the effect that soon several fine shirts reposed in neat piles of three on the suit of clothes. A collar-box was the next addition to the wardrobe which Mr. Horner was thus stealthily collecting.

He had turned toward the open bureau drawer to select some of the handkerchiefs in it, when suddenly he stopped, with his arm outstretched, as though turned to stone. Some one was listening at the door!

He saw the knob of the door move before he heard the faint sound of its turning. Thank Heaven, he had made sure that it was locked!

In the pause which followed the unsuccessful attempt of the would-be intruder, Mr. Horner ventured, scarcely breathing, to tiptoe softly in the direction of the door. As he was fortunately in his stocking feet, this action was almost noiseless.

Nevertheless, he was so excited that he almost overturned a chair, which he succeeded in catching before it fell. Hardly, however, had he set it upright again when he heard the rattle of a bunch of keys.

The person outside was evidently anxious to come in. As Mr. Horner sprang forward, quickly but stealthily, he heard one of the keys go sliding into the lock, and presently the click of the wards reached his ears; but not before he had time to reach out and slip the smooth bolt into place.

He was safe! There was no way of unfastening that bolt except from the inside.

The efforts of the person outside continued for a time, and finally ceased as suddenly as they had begun. Then the stillness was broken by a rapping of knuckles on the door.

This sound was repeated three times before the party with the keys moved away, making as much noise as possible. Mr. Horner, who had stood breathless during the whole time, understood this ostentatious departure to be somewhat in the nature of a threat. This is one of the favorite maneuvers of ladies who let rooms for a living.

Presently he ventured to resume his

quiet occupation of packing the suitcase. This done, he set the bag near the door and listened intently for a long time.

Seemingly satisfied at last that the person with the keys had really gone away, he cautiously drew the bolt and again listened. There was not a sound in the hall outside.

With sudden decision, he took a key from his pocket and inserted it into the lock, which clicked audibly as he turned the key. Cautiously he opened the door and peered out into the hall. It was empty.

He closed the door and set a chair against it; then he sat down in the chair and put on his shoes. This done, he arose, and keeping his eyes on the door, took a light overcoat from the sofa and put it on.

His hat lay on a chair by the window where he had been standing before he began to pack the bag. Still keeping an eye on the door-knob, he walked softly toward the window and placed the hat on his head.

There was a look of determination on his face as he opened the door and stepped out, with the suit-case in his hand.

It was but a few steps from the door to the head of the stairs on the right. Soon, walking as softly as the weight of the bag allowed, he reached the middle of the stairs and saw before him, not more than twelve steps away, the front door which led to freedom.

In his excitement he stepped incautiously on a board which creaked loudly under his weight. The sound startled him, and he looked around hastily; but there was no one in sight.

He breathed freely again, and soon he was at the door, whose two latches, needing to be turned simultaneously, caused him to set down the suit-case.

"Where are you going with that bag?"

The voice rang out behind him, and he turned hastily, still keeping his hand on the door-knob.

"So this is what you're up to, sneaking about the room with the door locked?" sneered the voice. "Trying to cheat a respectable, hard-working woman out of her just due? I'll trouble

you to take that bag back up-stairs again, *Mister* Englishman! I see the breed ain't changed since Bunker Hill. You take that bag back where you brought it from; and then I want to give you a piece of my mind, young man."

"I won't do anything of the sort," stammered Mr. Horner, who by his voice had evidently not been very long in the land of the free.

"Won't, eh? Now, look here, young man, you do as I tell you, and be quick about it, or I'll have you arrested for a thief! I can do it, for you're owing me a week's rent now, and the law allows me to hold your things till I'm paid—see? Now, take it up-stairs, in a hurry!"

There was nothing for it but to do as he was told. The lady had the whip-hand of him; and so, trembling with indignation at being thus spoken to, and blushing with shame at being detected in what was "rather a low-down thing to do," as he told himself, Mr. Horner obeyed as meekly as he could.

When he came down again Mrs. Moon was waiting for him.

"Now, when I get through talking to you, you can leave my house," she said, in withering tones. "You ain't a gentleman, or you'd never stoop to such underhand ways as to sneak out when I ain't looking! I've seen your kind before! There never was one of you yet that wouldn't sneak and steal and lie; but, thank God! you're as easy to lick now as you ever was!"

She went on storming at him, punctuating her remarks with frequent references to the battle of Bunker Hill; for Mrs. Moon was from New England, and was not a bit ashamed of the fact. Indeed, it was to her inborn shrewdness and economy that she owed her success as a New York lodging-house keeper.

The front door opened, and one of the other lodgers came in. As he passed through the hall, he grinned sympathetically at Mr. Horner, who stood with downcast eyes.

Mrs. Moon raised her voice for the benefit of this gentleman; it was just as well that he, who was none too punctual with his rent, should get a notion of what were her powers of invective when outraged by the misdeeds of a lodger.

At last she stopped for want of breath, and Mr. Horner opened the door and stood ready to depart. She motioned to him to clear out and never come back, and he obeyed.

But before going, he turned to her and said: "You're a—er—rather cheeky female, and hardly what I should call a lady. And you've made a mistake; I shall come back in a day or two and pay you what I owe, and then I shall have the great pleasure of removing my belongings from your custody. I shall, of course, be glad to recommend you for courtesy as well as for efficiency. Good day."

With this Parthian shot, he banged the door and left her staring in wrathful amazement.

Now, Mr. Horner had meant well when he tried to take some of his clothes away from his room at Mrs. Moon's. For he had become ashamed of leaving his rent so long unpaid, and the thought had occurred to him that he ought to raise the money by pawning some of his wardrobe.

For this purpose he had selected some of his most expensive clothes, which were worth at least ten times the seven dollars that he would ask for them. Of course, he had to go about his performance in secret; for the landlady would naturally misconstrue his effort to take a suit-case away.

And so she had. The matter had ended rather disastrously for Mr. Horner, inasmuch as he had been turned out of his room, with only one dollar and seventy cents in his pocket.

He had been exactly fifteen days in New York, whither he had come from his home in London, in search of a position.

He and a friend had conducted a small business in London, but, in the belief that New York was the place for a young man to start upon a career, Mr. Horner had drawn out of the partnership. He had barely enough money for his passage and the expenses of the first few weeks, but his old partner was to send him the balance of his share in a fortnight.

In order to make sure of having enough funds to live upon until the check from his partner came, he had written to his

aunt in the country, who never disappointed any one, requesting the loan of twenty pounds, to be sent to him in care of General Delivery, New York. The good lady, he was sure, had sent the money; but the mail steamer had sustained an accident off Queenstown, and was several days late.

The morning paper had reported her signaled, however, and it was only a question of a few hours before Mr. Horner would be, as he thought, richer by about one hundred dollars.

This was a cheerful reflection, and Mr. Horner dwelt upon it; for he was very near to what he had heard called "bed-rock." He had not counted on an accident to the steamer which was bringing him the remittance from his aunt, and so he had been less careful of his resources than he should have been.

It had been very pleasant to go to the theaters in the evenings, and a cheap seat was as good as a more expensive one. But the money had gone before he knew it, and he found himself owing the second week's rent, with not even a watch to pawn.

His timepiece had been stolen from his cabin on the way over, and even the purser had not been able to unearth its whereabouts.

He had been so unfortunate as to arrive in New York when money was "tight"; and so, although he was really a good business man, with excellent credentials, Mr. Horner had not been able to find a position. Every one of the business men whom he interviewed had assured him that he was such a man as they were looking for, but that, until the financial crisis was past, they could not afford to make any additions to their pay-rolls.

Indeed, many of them were discharging all but the clerks absolutely necessary to keep business going. Couldn't he come in again in, say three weeks? There might be something then.

Mr. Horner did not give up hope of eventually getting a position, nor was he especially alarmed at the non-appearance of the remittance from Aunt Ellen. His sole cause for worry had been the unpaid bill for room rent, and he had done his best to pay that.

Now, however, he was for the present

homeless, although the next day would bring him the hundred dollars which would keep a roof over his head until his partner's check came.

There must be a cheap lodging-house where he could pass the night; and, although he shuddered at the thought of dirt and foul air, he cheered himself with the assurance that it was for one night only.

It was growing dark, for the winter was beginning to set in. He bought an evening paper with which to while away the time; and because it was too dark to see outdoors, he went into a brightly lighted restaurant and ordered a cup of tea. He was still very English in his habits, and it was the hour of tea-drinking.

When he was about to pay for the tea and bread and butter, his fingers came in contact with something in his vest-pocket. Absently he felt the object, and then started, for a strange idea had come to him.

He chuckled to himself as he walked out into the dusk. He made up his mind that one o'clock would be an excellent hour to dine, since he would then not need breakfast the next day until almost noon. It was just as well, too, to put off the filthy lodging-house as long as possible.

Five o'clock! He had eight hours to while away before dinner. But what an exciting time he would have after that!

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE FIND.

AT twenty minutes past one o'clock on the same evening, Mr. Horner tossed off the remainder of his "coffee," as the fluid was labeled on the soiled bill of fare, and made up his mind that it was time to go about his business.

This business was no other than that which is most successfully accomplished between the hours of 1 and 3 A.M. It was the thought of it that had caused him such joy earlier in the evening.

He had found it difficult to repress his excitement during the eight long hours he had whiled away, goodness knows how.

He picked up the greasy check, paid

the cashier, and passed out into the open air. The night was fine and clear and not a bit cold. A good sort of night, he thought, on which to make his first venture in a new line of work.

As he wandered up Broadway he looked longingly at the window displays in the brilliantly lighted shops. In one haberdashery store he saw a shirt which was exactly like one reposing at that moment in the suit-case which he intended to get if it cost him the risk of running foul of the law.

He stopped at a window which had a mirror in it, and instinctively straightened his tie. To himself he deplored the lack of a scarf-pin, and immediately his eye fell on a perfect beauty—a pearl set with a ring of alternate diamonds and sapphires. He made up his mind on the spot that, if he ever had money enough, he would buy that pin.

He put his hand into his pocket and reassured himself that the mysterious object was there. It was nothing less than a key—the "open sesame" to Mrs. Moon's front door, and by its side reposed the other key, which would admit him to his own room on the second-floor front.

He chuckled at the thought that Mrs. Moon had been too much enraged to ask for the keys when she turned him out. She had been discourteous to him at the very moment when he was making an effort to pay his debt to her.

Very well! He would give her something to make a row about.

He caught a glimpse of a familiar number, came to a stop, and gazed up at the sign-board in order to make sure of the number of the street. It was the one he wanted, and he turned down it in the direction of Fifth Avenue.

Presently he halted and looked across the way at one of the houses on the opposite side. It was the "refined mansion" of Mrs. Moon, where all his personal belongings lay in the far-away seclusion of the second-floor front.

He made sure that there were no lights burning in the house, with the exception of the gas-jet in the front hall.

While he paused, oscillating on the pavement with that uncertain manner of the amateur who has never attempted anything of the sort before, a policeman passed and eyed him suspiciously. Mr.

Horner reflected that, at home, the policeman on the beat was a special friend of his, who made no trouble when he, having forgotten his keys, threw gravel at the window in order to wake his partner, who roomed with him. But this minion of the law had glared at him for merely leaning against a railing.

With his heart between his teeth, Mr. Horner started desperately across the street, and was by no means reassured when he reached the other side to find that the policeman had stopped on the corner and was observing him. It would never do to let the man suspect that there was anything wrong; so, putting on a brave front, and with the air of having lived there all his life, Mr. Horner went up the steps, took the key from his pocket, and inserted it into the lock.

He pushed open the door and tiptoed within; although he tried hard to shut it noiselessly, the hinges creaked with a sound that seemed loud enough to alarm everybody on the block.

Creeping up-stairs was the next thing to be done, and he started gingerly, lifting his feet higher than he had ever done while mountain-climbing in Switzerland. To his horror, he had no sooner set foot upon the third step than he remembered having noticed that the board was loose. He tried to draw back his right foot, but it was too late; the board creaked louder than the door had done, and just at that moment somebody in the back hall-room snored and turned in his sleep.

The amateur burglar jumped at the sound, and came down, as he thought, with a thud. He was minded at the moment to turn and flee, but the spirit of the Horners came to his rescue, and he gritted his teeth, remembering the insulting remarks of the landlady.

He reached the second floor at length, and paused, with his hand on the rail, to make sure of the direction. He put out his other hand and felt for the wall, and just then he heard the click of a key in the front-door lock.

Footsteps sounded in the hall, and he held his breath while he listened for the first footfall on the stairs. To his unspeakable relief, however, the footsteps kept on, and presently he heard the snick of a safety lock down-stairs. With a gasp of satisfaction he remembered that the

back parlor on the first floor was occupied by a traveling salesman who came in at all hours about three times a week.

He waited, motionless, for a minute, then he moved cautiously in the direction of the front room, keeping his hand on the wall for guidance.

His nerves were strung to a tremendous pitch of excitement, and he started violently as he heard the faint thud of a boot upon the floor below. Bit by bit he felt his way along the wall, and at last he felt sure that the door was about an inch away from his nose.

He lifted his left hand to touch it, but bumped it hard with his knuckles instead, and shivered as the hollow sound of the contact reached his ears.

It seemed ages before he found the key-hole and inserted the key. Then more ages elapsed before he dared turn the key, and the catch of the lock when he did turn it startled him like the cocking of a revolver. Thank Heaven! This door did not creak.

He succeeded in shutting the door without banging it, and then for the first time he dared to make a light. He struck a match and held it inside his hat; that was a trick he had often used at school, when he read after "lights out" by the aid of a candle stuck into an old hat. There was a faint light in the room already, reflected from the arc-lamp in the street by the windows opposite.

Cautiously he moved his improvised dark-lantern about the apartment, as he tried to locate the suit-case. The match burned his fingers and went out. He struck another, and by its light saw that the bag was in the place where he had left it, but he was surprised to find it open.

His first thought was that the officious lady of the house had opened it to see what it was he had tried to carry away, but by the aid of another match he noted that its contents had not been tampered with, and he heaved a sigh of relief. The match went out before he had a chance to make sure whether he had packed everything he would need.

As he bent over the bag it occurred to him that he had better take his tooth-brush with him. He started toward the bedroom, which opened on the left. He clutched the portières, and was about to

pull it back when he heard in the room beyond the unmistakable sound of breathing.

Horrors! There was some one in the bedroom asleep! What if the person should waken suddenly and hear him moving about?

He made up his mind instantly that the tooth-brush was not worth risking arrest as a burglar, and retreated to the chair on which the suit-case lay. From the bedroom there came a sound which froze the blood in his heart. The occupant was getting out of bed!

The portières parted, and in the dim light of the arc-lamp Mr. Horner saw, to his horror, a white-robed figure come gliding into the room where he crouched beside the chair.

Steadily it advanced toward him, without a sound. It was as though he were watching a ghost walk. He was paralyzed, unable to move a finger.

Now it was close upon him. What a cold-blooded way to take to scare a burglar! Nearer—nearer! Ah! The figure put out a hand, as though in menace.

Mr. Horner thought he heard a faint sound, as of something falling on the carpeted floor. Then there happened one of the most astounding things he had ever witnessed.

The figure turned away, although it had been so close as to brush him with the white robe which it wore. It stopped, advanced a step, and curtsied in the faint, reflected light of the arc-lamp.

How Mr. Horner got the idea he could not tell, but all at once it came over him that all his fear had been for nothing. The white-robed figure was asleep!

At least, it glided back in the direction of the bedroom and disappeared through the portières.

It seemed an eternity before he ventured to arise from his crouching posture and grope for the straps of the bag, which was still open. He spent hours in fastening the straps, for he dared not strike another match.

At length he lifted the bag from the chair, swung it carefully down to his side, and instinctively put out his left arm in order to balance himself against the weight.

His fingers touched something that could be nothing but silk. Hastily he

drew his hand away, appalled at the thought that went flashing through his brain; but not before he had felt the meshed threads of what he knew instinctively to be a lace ruffle.

Mr. Horner made a precipitate dash for the door, stumbled against it, managed somehow to get it open, and almost ran down the stairs. How he found the latch and got out of the house he did not remember when he stopped at the corner of the street and wiped the perspiration from his face.

A woman! Great Heavens! And she wore silk skirts, too! And he had run the risk of awakening this female, all for the sake of a few collars and some other things.

He wouldn't do it again for a whole haberdashery store! And what a woman—who walked in her sleep and scared people!

Who was she? Not that he cared at all for her personality; that did not interest him. But she had badly frightened him—"scared him out of a year's growth," he believed, was the proper expression—and he would like to know more about the one person who had ever made him feel afraid.

It was strange beyond belief that his room should be let to any one so soon after his departure, especially as his trunk and other things had not as yet been removed.

At any rate, it was some consolation, after the terror he had experienced, to think that he had not taken the risk for nothing. He had now at his disposal the means of preserving his self-respect, all save the tooth-brush, which had come so near to being his undoing.

But—he had no place in which to keep his finery. Worse than that, he had no place in which to make the much-desired change in his attire. A clean collar could be adjusted in any convenient doorway, but a shirt—where the deuce did people change their shirts who had no place to change them in?

Mr. Horner reflected that they did not change them at all, since people without homes may safely be said to be without spare shirts also.

There was nothing to it but a cheap lodging-house. But, no—it would never do to take a bag to such a place! He

remembered having read in a London paper that these resorts were dens of murder, where no one dared be seen with anything of value in his possession.

Ah—the Salvation Army barracks! But where were they? He did not know, and he could not ask a policeman, because the bag in his hand would at once arouse the suspicions of the law. Why had he taken the confounded suit-case, anyway?

He was walking along in a rather aimless fashion, meditating on these problems, when there flashed into his mind the remembrance of a friend of his, Billy Crewe.

Billy was a singer, in great demand at festivities of the rich, although during the day he sat behind a screened window in a London bank and refused payment on unsatisfactory checks. His voice was bringing him not a little money, but he still kept up his association with the bank. And so it often happened that he would rush off, bag in hand, to catch a train for some place in the country where he was to sing in the evening.

It was one of Billy's favorite doings to change into evening-dress while on the train. He would find a compartment that was empty, and, with the quickness of one born to do lightning-change acts, would appear on the platform of the farther station, eminently presentable in clothes of the latest cut, shiny boots, and all.

His friends all chaffed him about it, but Billy did not care. In fact, he was rather proud of his cleverness.

Following this train of remembrance, Mr. Horner arrived at a solution of his difficulty. By the way, he must, as soon as he had the money, send Billy one of the American bags—a suit-case like his own. They were so much handier, especially for dress-clothes, than the old-fashioned Gladstone. He was rather glad he had bought one when he first landed, although it had the drawback of being painfully new.

Yes, if Billy could change his clothes in a compartment of an English train, he—Mr. Horner—could change his in a lavatory of an American station, and what was more convenient for his purpose than the Grand Central Station, which he had visited in the course of one of his rambles?

He headed in the direction of the station, which, he remembered, was on Forty-Second Street, near Fifth Avenue. As he walked he reflected that he could not only change into a clean shirt, but that he had also a place where he could leave his bag.

Suddenly the illuminated clock-face of the station-tower hove in sight, and he saw that the hands were pointing to half past two. Only an hour had elapsed since he had started out to commit burglary—of his own property.

How he had lived during that hour! It seemed impossible that so much could happen in so short a space of time. How sleepy he was, all of a sudden!

The station was almost empty. Up on the platform of the main waiting-room a man with a megaphone was announcing the arrival of a train that was several hours late. The voice droned and echoed through the empty hall, arousing the few stragglers who were drowsing away the period of waiting for some outgoing train.

The sight of these sleepy-headed persons gave him an idea. He also could snatch a few winks of sleep on one of the benches. At least, it would be cleaner than any lodging-house he could afford, and it would cost him nothing.

After some search, he found the men's waiting-room, sought out an obscure corner, and unfastened the straps of his suit-case, yawning prodigiously the while. His collar-box, he remembered, was in the left-hand corner.

Sleepily he reached for it, and touched an object which somehow did not feel like anything he had put into the bag. The back of his hand encountered the round surface of his collar-box, and for a moment he caressed it lovingly; but what on earth was this small, flattish thing?

Lazily he drew it out and looked at it. The thing was a jewel-case, but it was not his. What was it doing in his suit-case, and how had it come there? Puzzled, he turned it over several times before it occurred to him to see what might be inside. He yawned again as he pressed the spring, and suddenly all his sleepiness vanished.

For there, reposing on the dark-blue velvet background, was a gold bracelet,

surmounted with a fine pearl set with a ring of alternate diamonds and sapphires!

CHAPTER III.

HARD LUCK INDEED.

To say that Mr. Horner was thunder-struck at the appearance of this specimen of the jeweler's handicraft is to put the matter very mildly indeed. He could do nothing but sit and stare at the thing.

Two questions were clamoring in his brain, each insisting on being answered before the other. With an effort he restrained his curiosity regarding one of them long enough to ask himself the answer to the other.

How had this thing come to be in his suit-case? Was it an accident, or had some devilish plot been formed against him?

The landlady could know nothing about it, he was sure; for she was not the one to leave anything of value, whether hers or another's, lying in the suit-case of a rascal who did not pay his bill.

Before he could think of any reasonable explanation of the extraordinary circumstance the other question, no longer to be denied, engaged his attention.

What sort of woman was this who came to live in a strange house and slept—or, rather, walked about in her sleep—all unconscious of the fact that a presumably costly jewel lay there, an easy prey to the casual burglar? This question, strangely enough, suggested an answer to the first.

Suppose the woman were an actress? Some of them, he knew, wore valuable jewelry; and by the very nature of their profession they were an irresponsible lot. It was possible that she also had left a suit-case lying on a chair, and, noticing his own bag where it lay unlocked, had mistaken it for hers and placed the jewel-case inside it.

Or, suppose—oh, hang it! there was nothing to suppose!

But he was too sleepy to argue the matter further. To-morrow would do for that. Meanwhile, it was now more necessary than ever that he should store the bag for safe keeping; for he would not take the risk of being robbed while

he slept, and the suit-case was the safest repository for the bracelet, since there was little chance of its being stolen.

How awfully convenient the station was! He would carry out his original idea of checking the suit-case in the baggage-room of the station.

He replaced the jewel-case in the bag, tucking it under the clothes. Then, remembering that he had not locked it, he drew out his keys and snapped the lock. This done, he seized the handle and walked out to the main waiting-room, where he found the checking department, and deposited the suit-case.

Absently he looked at the check before putting it into his pocket. He had never seen one like it before. There was a number on it, and sleepily he repeated it to himself. Then, with a sigh of relief, he turned away, found a convenient bench, and dropped off to sleep as soon as he was comfortably settled.

It seemed to him that he had not slept ten minutes when some one shook him violently by the shoulder. Strange words reached his ears, and he opened his eyes to find one of the station-hands anathematizing him for having dared to sleep on the company's premises.

"What do you think this is, you dead-beat—a hotel?" snarled the man as he turned him out.

Mr. Horner was not fully awake, so he reached for his watch; but, not finding it, he awoke to the recollection that he had no watch, and disconsolately he turned out into the street. He looked up at the clock-tower and saw that it was half past six. Then he had slept for four hours! Not so bad, after all!

There was a lunch-counter across the way, and he thought of going in and getting something to eat. But prudence restrained him; for if he were to eat now, he would be hungry again before noon, and that would never do. So he shut his eyes and walked resolutely past the place.

Then he thought of turning back to the station and seeing if the suit-case were safe. But that would be so foolish! Thousands of bags and umbrellas were left at that counter every day, and it was hardly likely that his would be the only one to be mislaid or taken by accident.

He walked on down Fifth Avenue to Twenty-Third Street, where he gazed up for the hundredth time at the Flatiron Building. He could never overcome his amazement at the feat of engineering which it represented. He himself, however, would not care to have an office on the twentieth floor.

The weather was not too cold, and he resolved to sleep for a while on one of the benches in the park. He flung himself down and tried to doze, but found himself thinking about the bracelet and the woman.

The sun came out, and he began to feel warm and comfortable, and presently he slid into an easy slumber. He dreamed that he was back in his room at Mrs. Moon's. He was ready for bed, but he must take another look at that beautiful scarf-pin of pearls and diamonds and sapphires which he had just bought. He looked at it for a long time, then put it back into its case and put the case into his pocket.

He turned out the light and got into bed. He was so sleepy!

What was that noise? He could hear the sound of breathing; there was some one in the other room. The footsteps—the man was tiptoeing—came nearer and nearer; he could feel that some one was bending over him.

He felt a hand steal into his pocket, where he had hidden the pearl scarf-pin; he tried to open his eyes and catch the thief, but could not. He was running to the window, to see whether the man had gone that way, when he stumbled over something in the dark.

It was his suit-case, which he had left lying open on the floor.

The man turned and seized him by the shoulder, and he struggled violently. The face before him changed suddenly, and he recognized the station-hand who had cursed him. Once more he felt himself shaken by the shoulder, and he opened his eyes.

This time it was the park policeman. That gentleman threatened him with arrest if he did not immediately move on, and he moved.

No sooner had he reached the street than a little dog yapped at him. A voice called from a distance, "Oh, do stop him, please!"

He made a dash for the dog, and landed on his face on the ground. Picking himself up, he grabbed the howling little beast and crossed the street to where a fat woman was wringing her hands in anguish lest her dear Snippet be run over.

As he handed the hairy puppy to its rightful owner, that lady took a piece of money from her purse and held it out to him. Indignantly he waved it aside, murmuring something about being only too glad to have been of service. Without waiting to listen to the lady's apologies, he hastened on his way.

The next moment he could have kicked himself, for, with only a handful of change in his pocket, he had no right to be proud, even if he were expecting a ship-load of gold in a few days. The steamer might sink, then where would he be? Confound him for being so stiff-necked! It had been a large piece of silver, too!

A pillar clock on the sidewalk was pointing to the hour of ten. He recollected that he had not yet breakfasted, and thought it high time to get something to eat.

So he turned into the doorway of a dairy-lunch place near by, and ordered coffee and a sandwich. That was about the cheapest meal he could get, and it was filling stuff, too.

He secured the plate and the steaming cup, and was on the point of carrying them away to one of the chairs that lined the wall, when he heard the monotonous cry of the man behind the counter, "Please pay on delivery and avoid mistakes."

So he turned back to the counter and put the plate and cup down again on the marble slab. Then he reached into his waistcoat-pocket for a dime or something larger.

There was nothing there!

He was perfectly certain that he had put his money into that pocket, but, thinking that he might be mistaken, he felt in each of his other pockets in turn—in vain.

His money was gone, and —sizzling sky-rockets!—his letters and papers, and, above all, the check for the suit-case; all were gone. Absolutely nothing remained in that pocket.

The man was eying him curiously.

"Lost your money, heh? Look here,

mister, you be off in a hurry! We hears that story every day. That don't go with us. See?"

He reached out and took the dishes.

The unfortunate owner of the suitcase was too bewildered to resent the insult. He went out into the street again, dazed and hungry.

What on earth had become of the check and of his papers? The money was a comparatively small matter. Had the dream of some one feeling in his pocket been real? Had he been robbed while asleep in the park, or was it while he dozed in the railroad station?

Great Cæsar! The thief was, in all probability, a man who knew his business; and although he would be able to make little or nothing out of the letters, he would undoubtedly know the value of the check.

Why, he might be even now taking the bag over the counter and chortling to himself at the easy way in which he became possessed of it!

Mr. Horner told himself frantically that it was a time for action. He must get up-town to the station as quickly as possible.

Luckily he had looked at the ticket before putting it into his pocket, and, sleepy as he had been at the time, he was sure that he remembered the number. Perhaps he could get to the checking-room in time to stop delivery of the suitcase.

But how could he get there? It was a mile and more to Forty-Second from Twenty-Third Street, and it would take him fifteen or twenty minutes to walk there even if he hurried. And what would be happening to the suit-case in the meantime?

Oh, if he had only discovered his loss before! Why had he taken the trouble and the risk of breaking into the house for that suit-case? It would have been much better to leave it where it was, for there it was safe from thieves at least.

There was no choice but to walk, and he started out as briskly as he could, considering that he was tired and very hungry. Manfully he trudged along, thinking that he had never seen cross-streets so wide apart.

He had often seen small boys in London steal rides on the backs of carriages,

and it came into his mind that he might do the same. Undignified it might be, but the first consideration was to get to the Grand Central Station, no matter what means of transportation he might choose.

So, as he walked, he kept a lookout for an available carriage, determined to down his pride and cling to the back of the vehicle like any gamin.

But it seemed that there were no coupés abroad that day. Many hansoms drove by, but it is the great shortcoming of a hansom that one cannot steal rides upon it; for there is little room on which to perch, and the driver is in the advantageous position directly above, within convenient lashing distance.

As luck would have it, an empty hansom drove by, going slowly, and forthwith a brilliant idea occurred to Mr. Horner. He gave the mystic sign which cabmen seem to be able to recognize in their sleep and with their backs turned. The hansom came to a stop, and he jumped in.

Now, one to the manner born would have yelled "Grand Central, rush!" as he sprung in; but Mr. Horner was still very English, and, therefore, deliberate. He lifted the trap and said: "The Grand Central Station, my man, in a hurry!" So, the driver knew that he would be able to demand an extortionate fare from this foreigner.

The whip flicked above the horse, and the walk changed to a smart trot.

Mr. Horner was by no means disturbed by the thought that he was about to run the risk of arrest. Still less was he conscious-stricken over the idea that he was about to "do" a cabman out of a fare.

Practically his only grudge in the world was against the fraternity of the whip; for he had never forgotten the time, some years before, when he had passed out a pound and received change for ten shillings only. The offender against Mr. Horner's sense of fair play had been a cabman, and ever since that day he had cherished the resolve to get even with the brotherhood.

He felt in all his pockets, and at last unearthed a green cigar-store coupon—one of those "funny farthing-change tickets you get with half a pound of bird's-eye," as he had written to Billy Crewe.

This he folded carefully many times, and as carefully unfolded again. Then he crumpled it up in his hand, and smoothed it out again. After several such treatments the cigar-coupon lost its natural stiffness and began to take on the pliability of a greenback.

At last Mr. Horner folded it twice and held it ready in his right hand. He resolved to remember the number of the cab, which was placarded on the front of the folding flap, and to send the man double fare when prosperity should be his again.

The hansom drew up with a flourish among the numerous cabs that never seem to leave the vicinity of the station-steps. The passenger jumped out, handed the driver the greenback he had prepared for him, sprang up the steps, and disappeared amid the whirling throng of incoming and outgoing passengers.

Mr. Horner did not hear the man's exclamation when the folded piece of paper came to view, nor the savage curse which followed it.

He ran up to the desk of the checking-room, and hurriedly explained to the clerk that he had lost his check, but that the number of it was 11,709. Had the suit-case been called for?

The man stooped and took from under the counter a pile of stubs. He selected two of these, and held them out to Mr. Horner.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Here's the check and the duplicate. A man called for the bag not ten minutes ago."

"A man—what man?" asked Mr. Horner excitedly.

"Don't know, sir. Didn't see him."

"How do you know it was a man, then?"

"By the mark, sir. You see, sometimes checks gets lost, just like yours; so we have little marks on the tags, to show whether the property belongs to a man or a woman. This sign on the tag is for a man, and it's been checked off as O.K."

"How about the ten minutes?"

"That's marked here, too. The stamp has the time-mark on it."

There was nothing further to be said, although the man expressed his sympathy for Mr. Horner's loss. The latter turned away in disgust and despair, and there is no telling what execration might

have passed his lips, but suddenly he saw something that held his admiring attention.

Mr. Horner was a connoisseur of beauty, and the young lady whose magnificence had caught his eye was, as he mentally apostrophized her, "a ripper, the princess of the revels, a little bit of paradise."

She was standing at a short distance from him, and was evidently of two minds regarding some weighty question. Her hair was dark-brown in color—Mr. Horner's favorite shade. Her eyes were hidden by the most jealous veil Mr. Horner remembered to have seen, but he could have taken oath that they were dark-blue.

In height she was about five feet six inches—"five, five and three-sixteenths," said Mr. Horner ecstatically to himself; just as high as his heart.

While Mr. Horner was engaged in this curious new study, which so successfully combined art and mathematics, the young lady who had inspired his fancy had evidently made up her mind on the subject which puzzled her.

She turned toward the checking-counter, and Mr. Horner almost shrieked at her not to have anything to do with the place. But he restrained himself, and watched her while the clerk took her suit-case and filled out the check. This she put into a dainty purse that she carried in her hand.

Then she started toward the Forty-Second Street exit.

Mr. Horner followed at a discreet distance. As she passed through the swinging doors he saw her drop something which, on examination after he had picked it up, proved to be the dainty purse.

He started after her, but she was already descending the steps. In his hurry to catch up with her, he completely forgot something which at another time, in his normal state of mind, he would have remembered.

As he dashed down the steps after the nodding bonnet, he heard a cry of "That's him!"

Now, it so happened that, when Mr. Horner ran into the station in search of his suit-case, the vituperous cabman, shorn of his legal fare, duped and out-

witted by a villain, had confided his woes to his bosom friend—to wit, one of the porters.

This gentleman had shown the proper amount of sympathy, but he had remarked that, in his opinion, that fare was "no better'n a busted blue chip"—by which term he meant to imply that the said fare was gone beyond recall, and that it was a plain case of hard luck.

Consequently he was considerably surprised when his friend, on the box yelled that he had seen the villain again. The porter, yearning to distinguish himself in the eyes of the onlookers, turned just a second too late, thereby missing a splendid opportunity of taking Mr. Horner into his arms.

He managed, however, to grasp the gentleman's coat as he went by; but the grip was not a firm one, and Mr. Horner, twisting vigorously at the correct moment, escaped and started to run, with the porter at his heels.

He had the presence of mind to turn the corner, and at that moment luck came his way for the first time.

A large dray was coming down the side street. Mr. Horner ran out into the middle of the street, slipped behind the dray, crossed to the other side, and joined the crowd that was streaming down the sidewalk.

But luck had smiled on him only momentarily. In his ecstasy at having eluded the pursuing porter he had forgotten to reckon with the cabman, who, from his exalted position on the box of the hansom, had followed the whole proceeding with interest. This gentleman kept his horse moving slowly along the curb, fixing his eye meanwhile on the conspicuous figure of Mr. Horner.

Nor was Mr. Horner unconscious of the fact. As he wormed his way through the crowd he felt that eye upon him, even as he felt the ghostly hand of the porter on his collar.

A hundred schemes for escape flashed through his mind, but he rejected them all as impracticable. He had almost resigned himself to the thought of arrest and imprisonment, when once more the luck turned.

The providential circumstance which intervened to aid him in his effort to escape from the eye of the cabman was

quite different from the dray which had saved him from the cocksure porter. It was nothing less than the cabman's instinct of trade; for a gentleman standing on the sidewalk made a signal, to which he, from force of habit, immediately responded.

The malignant eye shifted from the small of Mr. Horner's back, and the removal of its baleful influence was immediately known to the young man, whom it had caused to squirm with horrified anticipation.

Mr. Horner turned sharply to the right as the hansom drove off, and later he had the exquisite pleasure of seeing, from the window of a drug-store, the disappointed porter returning to the station without his captive.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE GRIP OF THE LAW.

MR. HORNER could hardly refrain from executing a war-dance upon the sidewalk when he came out of the drug-store and looked after the retreating form of the porter. He was restrained from any such exhibition, however, by the realization that, while he had been playing puss-in-the-corner with the cabman and the porter, the lady had disappeared.

He took out the purse and looked at it. There was no monogram or name on it; the only ornamentation was the silver clasp. Obviously the purse of a lady, he thought, as he put it resolutely back into his pocket.

He made up his mind not to look into it until it became necessary to do so; for that would, in a sense, be intruding on the lady's privacy. He assured himself that it would not be necessary, for something told him that he would see her again.

Fate could not be so unkind as to decree that he should never again look upon the one woman who had caused his heart to flutter.

He would have liked to go on dreaming about the young lady, but it was essential that he should find some work to do, and immediately, if he did not want to starve. He remembered that he had eaten nothing.

When the question of eating arose, he

thought at first of trying the saloons, where he had seen "free lunch," as it was called, spread forth for the delectation of those who patronized the place. But he remembered having seen an unfortunate individual cast out neck and crop by a burly attendant for having dared to eat without first buying a drink; evidently the practise was looked upon with disfavor. So he would not run the risk of being expelled in like manner; he had already suffered enough indignities for one day.

But, if he were not going to eat, he must at least do something to prevent himself from recollecting how hungry he was. Happy thought! He would go to the post-office and inquire whether the letter from his aunt had come yet.

Chance threw in his way the means of ascertaining whether or not the Castanan had docked, for a piece of newspaper came fluttering across the street and stopped at his feet. As luck would have it, the page contained the shipping news, and after some examination he found the report of the European steamers. Yes, there it was! "The Castanan, mails, London, twenty-sixth, delayed at Queens-town, arrived and at pier."

But what post-office was he to go to? A benevolent-looking old gentleman was coming down the avenue, and Mr. Horner ventured to stop him and inquire the way to the central post-office. He was directed to go to Twenty-Third Street and turn down to the left until he reached Madison Avenue.

"It was a long and weary pull for a hungry man, but Mr. Horner kept doggedly on, inspired to fresh efforts by the hope of immediate wealth that loomed before him. Twenty pounds—one hundred dollars! Phew! The thought of it took his breath away.

Enlivened by the glorious prospect, he managed to reach the post-office at last, and was in an agony of suspense all the time he was trying to find the right person of whom to make inquiries. Having discovered the right window, he had to wait for a moment until two other people had found out what they wished to know, and then, with a beating heart, he asked the all-important question of the man behind the wicket.

Where should he inquire for a letter

addressed to him in care of General Delivery, New York? Oh, that would be in the main office, down-town. But couldn't it be sent up to this office? It was not the usual proceeding, said the clerk.

Where, then, was the down-town office? Near City Hall Square—where was that? How far?

It was a despondent yet wildly infuriated Mr. Horner who turned away from that window. This was the worst luck he had ever encountered!

To have the letter within his grasp, so to speak, and yet to learn that it was several miles away from him. Cruel fate!

His brain was whirling when he reached the street again. How on earth was he to walk several miles, when he had already nearly perished in walking one?

Desperately he tried to think of some way in which to go down-town to the City Hall, but he could find none. Oh, hang the luck! If he were not so hungry and weary, he would be able to appreciate the joke. As it was, however, it was not at all funny.

Now, in this uncertain life there is one thing that is very certain. If Fate has it in for any one, that person will, after much tribulation, find some way out of the present difficulty, only to meet with a worse difficulty at the other end. And so it was with Mr. Henry Horner, of London, England.

He was standing despondently on the sidewalk when his attention was attracted to a big dray which was passing in the midst of the congested traffic. Suddenly the pressure was relaxed in front, and the various vehicles sprang forward with one accord.

The driver of the dray pulled to one side, and as the wagon came close to where he was standing, Mr. Horner saw that it was filled with scrap iron for some foundry.

At the top of the load lay a big, jagged piece of steel, which might have been anything; but it was badly battered out of all recognition, and bristled with points. One of these points was much longer than the rest, so long that it might easily serve as a handle by which to lift the whole.

As the wagon clattered past him, Mr.

Horner saw this piece of metal totter and fall crashing to the street. The driver apparently did not notice the occurrence, for he did not stop.

Instinctively, Mr. Horner reached out, snatched at the handle-like projection of metal, and dragged the formidable spiked object out of the way of an automobile which came shooting past at the same instant. There was a snap as the ignition spark was turned off, the brakes were applied with grinding force, and the machine came to a stop.

It was a pale but delighted chauffeur who cried his thanks to Mr. Horner from the driver's seat.

"Gee! but that would have busted me for fair! Much obliged, old man. The boss'd have given me the bounce if anything had happened to the car. I'm always asking for new tires, and he's been awful sore about it lately. Much obliged. Got to get down to City Hall in a hurry. S'long."

City Hall! The traffic policeman was signaling to the chauffeur to cut along, but he delayed for another instant as Mr. Horner unconsciously raised his hand.

"City Hall, you say? Would you mind giving me a lift? I—I've got to meet a man in a hurry, down there, and I'm late now."

"Surest thing you know! Jump in, right here. All right, colonel, we're moving!"

This last to the policeman, who was getting restive. The power was turned on, and the machine shot forward, to turn down a side street and go merrily on its way.

All the way down Broadway the chauffeur, looking straight ahead of him, by turns thanked Mr. Horner and expatiated on the shortcomings of his "boss." That gentleman, it appeared, was the hardest man to please that ever was born, and if the tires had been messed with by that bunch of iron—gee!

When the car drew up on the corner of Warren Street, Mr. Horner and the chauffeur tried to outdo each other in the way of returning thanks for favors done. One was suffering from an attack of gratitude, and the other was a Londoner from London, where everybody thanks everybody else as a matter of course. So it was a very pretty scene, cut and come

again—"Much obliged, pray don't mention it, thank you a thousand times."

At last the grateful chauffeur jolted merrily on his way, and Mr. Horner walked a short distance and found himself opposite the post-office.

Here he had considerable difficulty in finding the place he wanted. Finally, however, after having gone up a dark stairway and searched in vain for a sign of a window, he was directed by a man to turn down a corridor. His heart leaped in anticipation as he beheld the window at which he was to receive his everlasting fortune—the letter from Aunt Ellen, with the equivalent of one hundred dollars inside.

There was a long line of people that extended along the whole side of the office. He took his place at the end of the line, and waited as patiently as he could until his turn came.

The clerk behind the grating asked his name, reached into a pigeonhole marked "H," and brought out a large packet of letters. These he told over rapidly, the heart of the man who watched him sinking as letter after letter was passed from one hand to the other.

At length only two envelopes remained. The watcher's expectation had ebbed away to zero, but suddenly his heart bounded as the clerk looked up and said: "Mr. Henry Horner?"

Good old Aunt Ellen! What a brick she was! He was so anxious and eager that he reached under the grating for the letter, but the clerk drew it back.

"I suppose you can identify yourself, Mr. Horner? Any letters addressed to yourself will do, or your visiting or business card."

Mr. Horner searched desperately in every one of his pockets, but could find no letter or card. Of course, he had none, for the thief had taken them all. What in Heaven's name was he to do?

The people behind him in the line were growing restive, and the clerk said: "Unless you can identify yourself immediately, Mr. Horner, I must ask you to step aside. You cannot block the way."

He was on the point of turning away in despair when inspiration came to him. To the astonishment of the clerk and the people in the line, Mr. Horner pulled off his coat, turned it inside out, almost tore

open the inner breast pocket, and exhibited to the gaze of the man behind the grating the words, "Mr. Henry Horner, January, 1906," written in ink on the tailor's tag.

He put on his coat with a triumphant air, and held out his hand for the letter.

"Ten cents unpaid postage, please," said the clerk.

Then Mr. Horner's nerve broke, and he almost wept,

What a horrible jest of Fate! To the amazement of everybody present, he turned away from the window; and the clerk grinned as he heard what sounded very much like an improper word.

Oh, Aunt Ellen, why didn't you have that letter weighed? When you write twelve pages to people on the other side of the water, you must pay the price the postal laws demand!

Mr. Horner went out into the street and swore by all the gods, mythical and otherwise, that he would get that letter or die in the attempt; but he was prevented from indulging in heroics by an insidious thought which the spirit of darkness put into his mind.

He fought it off, but it returned with increased vigor, until Mr. Horner almost gave in. With a last despairing effort he strove to put the idea from him.

Whether he would have succeeded in so doing must forever remain unknown, for he was not given the chance to prove himself above temptation. On the other side of the avenue he saw a familiar object, and the sight took his breath away.

He had already taken the fair unknown's purse from his pocket, and was struggling against the temptation to take ten cents from it, when there appeared the vision which caused him to return the purse, unopened, to his pocket with all haste.

For there on the other side of the street a man was walking, and he carried in his hand what Mr. Horner would, with his eyes shut, have sworn to as his own property—nothing less than the suit-case which had been the cause of so much mental anguish!

When he recovered from his astonishment at this unexpected apparition, Mr. Horner did not immediately rush across and demand his bag. Instead, he debated within himself whether this might

not be a new device of his evil genius to bring further humiliation upon him.

He decided, however, that it would be advisable to follow the man and take a closer look at the suit-case.

Accordingly, he hastened down to the corner of the street, crossed over leisurely, and fell in behind the man, who appeared to be a person of some consequence. How then, asked Mr. Horner of himself, did it happen that he had his suit-case?

For there was now no longer any doubt in the matter. There was the familiar painfully new exterior, and on the end of the bag the initials, "H. H."

Carried away by the conviction that, in some mysterious manner, the respectable-looking stranger had become possessed of his suit-case, Mr. Horner threw discretion to the winds, and, advancing abreast of the stranger, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, as courteously as possible, "may I inquire where you got that bag?"

The man turned and looked at him.

"You may, sir," he replied. "I got it, if I remember aright, at Jones & Thatcher's—and very good bags they make, too."

Mr. Horner became angry at the fellow's facetiousness.

"Are you sure you didn't get it at the checking-room of the Grand Central Station?" he asked sarcastically.

"Confound you, what do you mean by that?" queried the stranger angrily. "You're drunk, that's what you are! Go home and sober up."

He attempted to pass on, but Mr. Horner took him by the shoulder and said:

"Not so fast. I've every reason to believe that that is my bag, which was stolen from the station last night; and I want to know how it came into your possession."

As invariably happens in the busiest city in the world, the passers-by began to crowd in upon the pair, for they scented a row of some kind. Nor were they disappointed, for both Mr. Horner and the stranger came to a stop, and seemed to be on the point of coming to blows also.

That is to say, Mr. Horton refused, in

spite of the polite yet forcible request of the stranger, to take his hand from the other's shoulder; and the latter, burdened as he was with the bag in one hand and an umbrella in the other, did the only thing that was possible for him to do.

He made a vicious swipe at Mr. Horner, and succeeded in bringing the umbrella to within half an inch of that gentleman's head. Whereupon, the object of his attack closed with him, and the crowd drew around in delightful anticipation of a rough-and-tumble fight, with odds in favor of Mr. Horner.

Now, the vicinity of the central post-office down-town is a busy locality, and therefore hardly the place in which to conduct a heated encounter of any sort or description. For the guardians of the peace are especially vigilant in that quarter, and many a man on the force has been promoted to the distinction of sergeant through just such a happening as seemed about to take place.

Thus it came about that before Mr. Horner and the stranger had time to damage each other to any extent, there pushed through the crowd one Policeman Rafferty, who, doubtless, had been long awaiting a chance to distinguish himself on his new beat.

He was a burly Irishman, and he was aware of his own strength. Consequently he did not hesitate to collar the contestants without ceremony.

At the same moment every one in the crowd, with the exception of the ragamuffins, recollected pressing engagements elsewhere; and, by the time that Policeman Rafferty had parted the pair of fighting-cocks, the sidewalk was empty.

Then ensued an excited triangular conversation, as follows:

"Come out av it! The both of yez to the station—for disturbin' the peace, see?"

"Officer, arrest that man! He's drunk and disorderly. He—"

"This thief has my suit-case, and—"

"Shut up, or it'll mean an extra tin days for obstructin' an officer in the ex-cushin av his juty!"

"Let me explain, officer. This man came up and accused me of—"

"Do yer explainin' to the sergeant. Come on, the two av yez."

And so it came about that Mr. Horner and the stranger, who had glowered at each other all the way to the precinct station, presently stood in front of the desk and gave their pedigrees while the sergeant wrote down the names and the complaint in the blotter.

There was some difficulty when Mr. Horner was asked for his address, for he had none. He got around the question, however, by stating that, as he had only recently come to New York, he had no definite residence. Then, in answer to the sergeant's sharp query regarding his home address, he gave the house of his Aunt Ellen, for he had occupied bachelor quarters in London ever since the death of his father had broken up the family.

The case came before the magistrate at three o'clock, and the adjusting of it took some time. For Mr. Horner persisted vehemently that while he regretted the unfortunate occurrence of a wrangle in the street, and while he understood that he was fully open to the charge of disorderly conduct, for which he now felt as sorry as it was possible to feel, he must nevertheless insist that the suit-case in evidence was his very own, which had been lost under most peculiar circumstances.

Equally positive was the stranger, who offered to produce testimony to the effect that he was a reputable citizen. His story was that the suit-case had been purchased at least a year before, and that the initials on the end were those of his brother, Mr. Harold Hughes—his own name being Edward.

The court then asked for a description of the property which would be found in the suit-case, in the event of it being actually the bag belonging to Mr. Horner. A similar request was made of the stranger.

Mr. Horner gave an inventory of the things in his bag, but did not mention the fact that among them was a bracelet, the value of which he did not know.

"And are those all the things in your bag, Mr. Horner?" asked the court.

"All that I can recall, your honor," lied Mr. Horner, who felt rather unhappy.

"And you, Mr. Hughes?"

Mr. Hughes blushed, and began to stammer. At length he answered that

he was afraid that, if it came to a question of identifying the bag by what was inside it, he could not do so; for his bag was empty!

It appeared that the suit-case had been left at the house of a friend, and that he was taking it to his office in order to deliver it to his brother, who was at that moment, he had no doubt, waiting there.

The court accordingly directed the bag to be opened, and this was done. Judge how great was Mr. Horner's mortification when before his eyes he saw a bag which, as Mr. Hughes had said, contained nothing!

The court then proceeded to the matter of disturbing the peace.

Mr. Horner frankly admitted that, in this case, the blame was entirely his own, as the stranger had merely resisted what he deemed to be a premeditated attack. He begged the favor of the court, exculpating the stranger, who, he was certain, was not to blame in the matter. At the same time, he asked to be allowed to make an apology to Mr. Hughes, and to crave his pardon for having thus laid him open to a charge of disorderly conduct.

Not to be outdone, the stranger then assured the court that he bore no ill-will toward Mr. Horner, and entreated that the case be dismissed, with costs.

Now arose the question as to which of the pair should pay the costs. Mr. Horner felt very uncomfortable, and was on the point of making the shameful confession that he had no money with which to pay costs, when the magistrate, who had been observing him closely for the last few minutes, asked him a question which had nothing to do with the case in hand.

It was then that Mr. Horner blessed his unmistakable English accent, and the fact that the magistrate had taken a post-graduate course at Oxford. For the court demanded to know whether he were related to Mr. Henry Horner, of Maviston-on-Trent, who had been a scholar at Balliol College, Oxford, in the year 1888. It appeared that the magistrate and Mr. Horner's father had met at college, having, in fact, contested for the same prize in an athletic event, which the magistrate had won after an exciting tussle.

The court immediately dismissed the case without costs, and unofficially in-

vited Mr. Horner to come and make him a visit whenever he cared to do so. The two gentlemen who had glared at each other over the matter of the suit-case now shook hands most amicably. Mr. Hughes took his suit-case and hastened away to keep his belated appointment with his brother; and Mr. Horner, after having conveyed to the court the ill news that his father was no more, walked out of the court-room, free, and rejoicing in the extraordinary coincidence to which he owed his liberty.

His joy, however, was soon changed to the very uncomfortable feeling that the worst was yet to come; for he suddenly realized that he was stranded down-town, hungry, and with no immediate prospect of getting anything to eat.

CHAPTER V.

UNDER THE RAZOR.

HUNGER is a queer thing. In most cases it makes a man despondent and at the same time desperate, but occasionally it makes him unusually cunning and watchful as well.

Mr. Horner had been despondent, and he was now desperate; but suddenly he seemed to lose the feeling of desperation and to become alert as a tiger on the scent of prey.

His pride would not permit him to beg, so there was but one course left open to him. He must eat; therefore, he would steal.

But how, and what? There were hawkers' carts in the street, filled with loaves and buns and such things; but these people were poor, like himself, and had done him no wrong; he could not wrong them by stealing from them.

Also, such a proceeding might end in his arrest, and this was undesirable in the extreme.

For a moment he entertained the idea of assaulting some one of the many well-to-do portly gentlemen who passed him on the street; but soon he abandoned the idea, for it smacked of desperation, and he was no longer desperate.

What a pity it was that his education had not included a course of instruction in the art of picking pockets! He laughed at himself for thinking that.

Suddenly he recalled the matter of free lunch in some saloon, and he saw his way clear to getting a meal of some sort, in spite of the guard usually exercised. It was a real inspiration, and he was not a little proud that the idea was his very own.

As he wandered up the street he kept a sharp lookout for such a place as he wanted, and at length saw the very thing which would enable him to carry out the plan he had in mind.

Now, the hungry tiger does not show by whining or snarling that he is hungry. Instead, he finds an appropriate background against which to work, and he keeps as quiet as possible while intent on business. So did Mr. Horner.

On the other side of the way, outside the swinging doors of a saloon, a crowd had gathered about a street faker who had some toy for sale. Mr. Horner smiled his approval of the man's energetic method of doing business, and pushed his way through the doors to the inside, where there were perhaps a dozen men standing around.

In a loud voice he ordered a glass of ale, and turned away from the bar to the free-lunch counter, where, under the eye of the attendant, he helped himself to a liberal portion of crackers and cheese.

The man had heard him give his order; therefore, he raised no objection to the taking of the eatables, although he opened his eyes at the generosity with which Mr. Horner treated himself to another man's goods.

But he did not notice Mr. Horner, as he passed under the lee of a group of men on his way to the bar, place the cheese in one pocket and the crackers in another. Nor did the bartender care especially that the gentleman who had ordered a glass of ale passed leisurely along the counter and stopped to inspect one of the pictures on the wall.

The foaming glass stood untouched while Mr. Horner strolled easily from picture to picture, examining each with the air of a connoisseur, and getting ever nearer and nearer the door.

He paused for a moment or two, and gazed in rapt admiration at the horrible daub which occupied the place of honor on the wall nearest the entrance, nor did

he move until the door was pushed open to admit some thirsty person whose entrance caused the flaps to swing violently backward in the direction of the street.

The way was clear, and Mr. Horner paused not a second; the attendant, looking up to survey the newcomer, saw for an instant two gentlemen standing face to face in the doorway; then the shutters swung to again, and but one gentleman remained. Mr. Horner was outside, in the heart of the throng which whirled about the loud-voiced faker.

One derby hat is very like another, and when such a hat has been seen only for a few moments, and not carefully observed at close range, it is practically impossible to pick it out in a number of hats which are constantly on the move. So the attendant, who ran to the door and gazed out in the vain endeavor to identify the thief of his employer's victuals, returned disheartened to the inside of the saloon, and did not recover his poise until he had absently drained the glass of ale which the villain had left untouched on the bar.

Meanwhile, Mr. Horner, who had kept one eye on the faker and the other on the door whence might issue possible pursuit, strolled aimlessly along the avenue, turned down a quiet side street, and munched his crackers and cheese with great zest. It was a meal worthy of the gods, and he did it full justice.

When he had finished the last crumb, he pulled out his pipe and tobacco-pouch—thank Heaven, they had not been stolen!—and lit up, feeling that it was not such a barren world, after all.

Whether it was that his long fast made him more than usually susceptible to the influence of tobacco, he could not tell. Suffice it that, as he walked along, he dreamed delightful dreams about the young lady whose purse was at that moment reposing in his pocket.

He fingered the little reticule, restraining an almost uncontrollable desire to take it out and kiss it.

If he could only see the owner of it again, what joy would be his! for he had a valid excuse for accosting her. With what admiration she would look at him when he told her that he had not opened it! Already in his mind's eye he could see her flashing smile; he could hear her

sweet voice murmuring words of thanks; he could feel the glance of those wonderful dark-blue eyes upon him.

Perhaps he might even dare to tell her how certain he had been that he would see her again! But would he see her?

And if he did? What warrant would he have for hoping to do more than present her purse, receive her thanks, and then depart? If she were a girl of the right sort, she would allow him to make no further advances. Oh, Mr. Horner, how little you know of the American girl—she who alone of all women can commit so-called indiscretions without being indiscreet, who can make advances and receive them without being bold!

Until now you have experienced only the tongue-tied, bashful English girl who is fastened to mother's apron-string. You know nothing of the most wonderful girl in the world, the greatest mystery among mysteriously bewitching women.

Oh, wait until you meet her! And for Heaven's sake and your own, don't be bashful!

In all his fortnight's stay in New York, Mr. Horner had not met a single young woman. Indeed, the only woman with whom he had spoken was the very much to be deplored Mrs. Moon, that paragon among landladies.

But his susceptible heart had been made to flutter by many a face, seen in passing on the street, or smiling opposite him in a crowded trolley-car.

But it had not entered his head that American girls might take a different view of things from their English sisters. Of course, he had read occasionally in the London papers of the madcap doings of some of the American young ladies who came to spend their fathers' money in Europe.

But he had imagined them to be, as it were, beside themselves, drunk with the wine of new sensations. Surely, at home they were sober-minded and very proper in their behavior!

Well, whatever might happen, he would be glad to behold the lady who had set him to thinking constantly about her. He would try not to be an idiot, and perhaps the gods would permit him to win favor in her eyes. But this was

counting his chickens before they were hatched!

His eye caught sight of a sign-board which a man bore aloft on his shoulders.

Mr. Horner looked up and read the sign, which said:

**FOR A FREE SHAVE AND HAIRCUT—GO TO
HEINRICH'S.**

Instinctively he put his hand to his chin. The two days' growth was very noticeable. He could never talk to *her* with his chin in that condition!

But what did the sign mean? Surely, no barber would cut a man's hair and shave him free of charge. It must be a trap to catch the unwary, like that old gag he had once heard: "What do you think I will shake you and give you a drink all for one penny," which, when read correctly, has an exclamation point after the "What!"

He stopped the man and asked him the meaning of the sign. The surly fellow did not answer him, but gave him a small leaflet, which contained the information he required. This was to the effect that Heinrich would cut the hair and shave the beard of any person who so desired, free of charge, at his school for barbers, and no tips allowed.

Wonderful, thought Mr. Horner, when he had finished reading. No one but an American, or one trained in American methods, would ever have thought of such a thing.

But what sort of work would these beginners do? They would probably spoil one's looks for a month!

He decided, however, that he would go to the place mentioned, which was only a few numbers away from where he was, and look on while some one else got shaved. Then, if it were all right, he would avail himself of the opportunity.

But he reckoned without his host, for he had no sooner pushed open the door at the head of the dingy staircase than a podgy German rolled toward him and seized his hat. Mr. Horner started back as the fat Teuton tried to divest him of his coat; but Heinrich was a man who knew his business; and before Mr. Horner realized what had happened, he was seated in a chair with a towel round his neck, looking somewhat nervously at the

young Italian who came toward him waving a sopping brush full of lather.

Heinrich had found that the best way to provide beards for his pupils to practise on was to seize the newcomer before he had time to watch the others get shaved, and to plump him down in a chair, from which he could only arise with difficulty. For it must be said that his pupils were somewhat slow to learn, and that their methods were more suited to the hair-removing department of a stock-yard than to the needs of the human countenance.

This Mr. Horner realized almost immediately, for as soon as the lather was applied to his face the young Italian did something with a saw-like implement which brought tears of anguish to Mr. Horner's eyes.

He could not repress an exclamation of pain, and that was fortunate for him. For Heinrich, coming up to inquire the cause of the noise, was filled with the indignation of the artist who sees another do crudely what he himself does well.

"Ach! Ten dousand dimes haf I dolt you to scrape so—not so! Gif me der razor, und I vill show once more. See now, like dis—und dis! See how I do it, Guido."

Mr. Horner, bound and betrayed, as it were, gave silent thanks for the interruption, and hoped that Heinrich might continue the work until the end. But this would have been too good to be true, for the German was an artist with the razor, and under his smooth touch Mr. Horner's chin began to lost its pain.

Still, Heinrich had done the greater part of the work before he relinquished the razor to the Italian; and the latter, feeling his teacher's eye upon him, really made shift to finish the operation without drawing even a groan from Mr. Horner.

When the shave was finished, and the towel applied, Heinrich came up and nodded to the victim. "Dot is better. Guido will do better mit your hair. He cuts almost well."

Mr. Horner jumped out of the chair.

"But I don't want my hair cut!" he exclaimed. "All I wanted was to be shaved, and I've got that."

"You vill be haircutted, too, mein

friend," replied Heinrich. "Eferybody gets haircutted as vell as shaved here. Come, Guido."

"But I tell you I don't want my hair cut!" almost screamed the indignant Mr. Horner. "It doesn't need cutting!"

"Dot is no difference. Vun shave, vun haircut—dot is always so here. You haf der shave. Now, take der haircut."

"Confound you, you idiot! I won't be bullied by a fat German like you. You can't cut my hair if I don't want you to. I'll have the law on you for it."

Mr. Horner was growing angry, but he perceived that the case was almost hopeless, for Heinrich evidently meant business.

"Come, come, mein friend. It is soon over, and Guido cuts almost vell, as I haf said."

He motioned to Guido, who seemed rather afraid that Mr. Horner might do him some injury.

It was a farcical predicament. In his innocence of those things which have, so to speak, a string tied to them, the Englishman had not thought of such an outcome to the affair. All he had bargained for was a shave, and to his cost he had been—butchered by an Italian ruffian with a saw.

But he had not intended to have his hair cut, and he could not understand why he should be forced to submit to the operation against his will. Why, it was supposed to be a free country!

If he had been able to reach his hat and coat, he would have chanced a run for it; but those articles of apparel were hanging where the wily Heinrich could reach them first. Heinrich knew his business, as has been said.

So it was that, much against his will and with the odds against him, Mr. Henry Horner, a subject of his Britannic majesty, sat down again in the chair and motioned Guido to go ahead.

"Please trim it lightly, if you must," he said, almost tearfully.

"Nod so!" said Heinrich, who overheard him. "Drim it lightly! Dot is no bractise at all. Cut him good, Guido. His hair is too long, alretty."

It is as well to draw a veil over the dreadful scene that followed. When Mr. Horner, of London, England, arose from the chair, he hardly recognized the

individual who grinned foolishly at him from the mirror on the wall.

His hair was close-cropped, like any convict's in a prison, and there were hills and valleys in the landscape which the side of his head presented.

He swore at the podgy German as he went through the door, and was not ashamed; for behind him, as he rushed up the staircase, he heard the hearty laughter of Heinrich, who thought it a most excellent jest, and resolved to try it on some one else some day.

Mr. Horner now perceived that night was approaching. The recognition of this fact brought home to him the staring truth that he was a homeless wanderer.

He thought, with a shudder, of all that had happened since his hasty exit from the house of Mrs. Moon. Doubtless there was more ill luck ahead of him; and, although the prospect did not frighten him, he made up his mind that he could not hope to withstand the blows of fortune unless he first obtained rest and food.

Of the two, the former was the one which demanded the most consideration, although the latter was by no means to be forgotten.

For the events of the day had proved that he could go for a long while without eating, but the loss of sleep would be a quick and certain means to the undermining of his health. Sleep he must; but not in a public place if he could help it, for he would not run the risk of having the purse of the fair unknown stolen while he slumbered.

He was in a part of the city where the underworld awakens after dark and comes out to play, to see the sights, and to make such living as it can. It was now half past five o'clock.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE TROUBLE.

THE city streets after dark! It is an impressive sight to us, whose appetites have been appeased by the good fare which is to be had in many a gilded café and restaurant.

But how does it seem to those who either will not or cannot earn their daily bread? And we, who think it so fine a

spectacle, can never grow altogether tired of it, because we have pillows on which to lay our heads when we are weary. But do the homeless never grow tired of it all?

Something of this sort Mr. Horner had often thought, in the days when; after a leisurely dinner, he and his friends would set out to see London ablaze with lights. He had asked himself these questions, wondering whether he should ever find the answer to them, and now he knew. It was new knowledge, obtained at first hand, and it was not comforting.

And he had experienced but little of that which was doubtless to be experienced. He wondered what would be his mental attitude if he were to keep in the same path for even a month.

His self-pity included all the unknown unfortunates around him that night as he walked drearily along the crowded sidewalks of New York.

He had always thought that those who come to be homeless are to blame for their condition; but to-night, himself on an equal footing with them through stress of circumstances, he felt that perhaps he had judged wrongly. In that throng there were probably others, victims of fate as well as he. They were his brothers in adversity.

This was a new point of view, one which can only be arrived at after hunger and ill luck have done their depressing work on the mind. But in his self-pity Mr. Horner did not recognize it as an illusion of circumstances.

Instead, his heart warmed toward the many homeless who must be abroad that night, and he scanned the faces of those who passed him in the endeavor to find one stamped with the indelible mark of good breeding. He felt that it would be a relief to his feelings to chum up with such a person, if he could find him.

When he came to analyze his present situation, he found that a miserable suitcase had been at the bottom of the whole trouble. For, had he not attempted to carry it away from the house, he would not have brought down the landlady's wrath on his head. And, were it not for the fact that it had been stolen, he would not now be worrying over what had become of it; and he admitted to

himself that worrying over the matter had caused him a great deal of discomfort and uneasiness.

But, on the other hand, if he had not lost the suit-case in the precise manner in which the loss had occurred, he would never have seen *her*, and would not now be living in the constant hope of seeing her again some day. Also, he would not be in the constant temptation to open her purse and try to find out her identity by means of it.

To escape from the temptation, which came to him anew, he tried to cease thinking about her; and to this end he concentrated his thoughts on the mysterious woman who had so frightened him by walking in her sleep while he was taking away the suit-case.

His mind would have been much relieved, and at the same time his wondering curiosity would have been aroused, had he known the identity of the person who owned that silk skirt with the lace ruffle which he had touched in the darkness. But, of course, there was not the slightest chance that he should be able to guess at the solution to the strange puzzle.

Suddenly, however, there flashed into his mind a possible solution to the other puzzle which was troubling him.

Now that he reflected more or less calmly on the matter, he remembered the slight sound of something falling which had reached his ears at the moment when, completely unnerved by the appearance of the sleep-walker, he crouched breathless behind the chair that held his suit-case. Something had dropped softly, as though there were a cushion under it to break its fall.

Was it not barely possible that the something was the jewel-case, and that it had fallen into the suit-case from the hand of the sleep-walker, who, perhaps, was bent on hiding it? He had heard of such cases—of people who, fearful of losing something which they valued, would get up in their sleep and hide it where even they, when awake, could not find it.

A case of that kind had happened to Billy Crewe's father, who mislaid some important papers while asleep. The papers had only been found when a member of the family discovered Billy's

father somnambulating, followed him, and saw him take a bundle of documents from inside a disused piano.

At least, that was the most plausible explanation of the mystery which had yet occurred to Mr. Horner. The owner of the bracelet, however, would never find it again, even in her sleep. It had probably been sold to a thieves' fence already, and the thief was undoubtedly at that moment feasting off the proceeds of his venture.

No, the suit-case was lost, with everything it contained. He would never again wear that suit of blue serge which he had set out to pawn.

Pawn! It was the first time, since his sudden and unceremonious exit from the house of Mrs. Moon, that Mr. Horner had remembered his original intention of pawning his clothes. And here he had been all day suffering the pangs of hunger and inventing schemes for the satisfying of his hunger, with the equivalent of money within his reach—on his back, in fact!

When he made the aforesaid exit he had on the light overcoat which he had picked up from the sofa. That was the coat which he had pulled off in order to show the post-office clerk his name on the inside of the pocket. Oh, what an idiot he had been!

However, it was not too late to remedy the mistake. The part of the city in which he then was, the home of the many who live from hand to mouth, was thickly sprinkled with pawn-shops, all open to catch the evening trade.

From where he stood at the moment of making the important discovery that he was a tremendous fool, Mr. Horner could see the illuminated signs of two or three of them. Why, he could make choice among them—take his pick of the places where he would transact business.

He finally decided on one of the more garishly lighted of the lot, arguing that the pretentiousness of the place was a possible guarantee of his getting a few cents more there than at any of the others. And so it came about that he presently issued from the shop of one Sol Stearns, the richer by the sum of two dollars and a half, and the poorer clad by one light overcoat. But this last did not matter very much, for the weather was warm.

His first step was to find an eating-place, where he gorged himself on such delicacies as kidney omelet and pie, washing the mixture down with strong tea. He took his time about eating, for it was a banquet after hours of starvation.

When he came out into the street again, with his cherished brier between his teeth, he discovered that his attitude toward the world in general had undergone a change. He was now once more a well-fed Briton, capable of doing anything to which he put his hand, smoking the pipe of comfort, untroubled by visions of the future.

But Fate had not yet finished with him. He had already made up his mind to go to the post-office the first thing in the morning, when there came to him the horrible thought that perhaps he had undone himself. Horror-stricken, he rushed beneath a street-lamp and frantically examined the pockets of his coat.

The suit had been bought ready-made when he sailed for New York, as there had been no time to order clothes from his tailor, and it contained no marks of identification. Great Cæsar! He had parted, for vile money, with the only evidence of his identity!

Now, he would never get that letter from Aunt Ellen, unless in some way he could find the suit-case, which contained clothes marked with his name. The outlook, which a moment before had been so rosy, was blacker than ever before. So much for overhastiness! Idiot! Fool!

But that was by no means the worst. For it was possible that his partner, who was to send him the proceeds of the sale of his share of the business, had mailed the money before waiting to hear from him. That money, too, would be inaccessible to him. The envelope containing the draft would lie and rot on the shelves of the post-office, along with Aunt Ellen's!

And it was all due to his not remembering the old proverb about the more haste, the less speed.

Perhaps it was an accident, perhaps he unconsciously recollected the fair unknown. At any rate, he drew out the purse, which—thank Heaven!—he had removed from his overcoat before pawn-

ing it, and looked at it for the fiftieth time.

It had by now become, in his eyes, a symbol of its owner, and he handled it reverently. But suddenly there came to him the old temptation, a hundredfold strong, to open the purse and seek to find out the identity of the lady.

With the sudden determination of a suicide as he pulls the trigger, he loosened the clasp. Then a wave of remorse swept over him, and he felt as one who violates a shrine. But presently the feeling was subdued, for he had gone too far to retreat. He strode forward under a convenient light and opened the purse.

There were several things in the outer compartment. Searching among them, he discovered a sample of veiling, half of a theater ticket some days old, twenty cents in change, and a small pencil.

None of these bore the stamp of the owner's personality. The compartment on the other side contained only a small tissue-wrapped parcel. He opened the parcel, and found that it held a number of cards—her cards, no doubt.

Under the flickering, badly burning arc-lamp he read on one of the cards the name, "Miss Ethel Stone." There was no address, no embellishment of any sort.

At least, now, he knew who she was. He thought that Ethel was the prettiest name in the world, and that it exactly suited her. But once he had set himself to desecrate the privacy of his unknown love, he would not stop until he had seen all that there was to be seen in the purse.

He opened the inner clasp, and almost dropped the purse in his astonishment. For the soft velvet interior pocket was crammed full with bills, and the first one which met his eye bore the figure fifty.

He closed the purse hurriedly, and put it, together with the pawn-ticket, into the inside pocket of his waistcoat. This was a greater sum of money than he had ever before had on his person at one time, and the possession of it made him uncomfortable.

He had been robbed once, and the same thing could happen again. If it should, it would not be his own property that he would lose, but that of the unknown young lady with whom he was

madly and hopelessly in love at first sight.

He set himself to thinking out some plan by which he could insure the safety of the large amount of money which he held in trust, as it were, for her—for Ethel, as he blushing named her to himself. After some blind mental groping, he formed what seemed to him an excellent plan, and the one which promised best results for all concerned.

He decided that he would return to the pawn-shop where he had left his overcoat, and get it back again, using some of Ethel's money for the purpose. Then he would have the means of identifying himself at the post-office on the morrow. He had also the requisite ten cents with which to redeem Aunt Ellen's letter, containing one hundred dollars.

But, meanwhile, he would insure the safety of his lady's money by going to a hotel, where he would take a room and pay for it out of her purse. The money so spent he would replace when he had cashed Aunt Ellen's draft.

It seemed to be a perfectly simple and safe way out of the difficulty, and he hastened to put it into execution.

He retraced his steps along the avenue, and presently passed the restaurant where he had recently dined. He looked in, and saw by the clock on the wall that it was already ten minutes past eight.

He had not realized that the time had flown so fast. He had left the place at a quarter past seven.

Soon he came to the vicinity of the pawn-shop. The same crowd of people seemed to be in the neighborhood, but there was less activity. He discovered the reason for this change almost immediately, for, on coming to the shop of Sol Stearns, he found that it had been closed for the night.

The crowd was composed of idlers only, hence there was none of the bustle which earlier in the evening had been caused by those intent on the business of pawning their worldly goods.

It was rather annoying to find that he could not then and there carry out his purpose of redeeming his overcoat; but, after all, that did not matter a great deal. For he resolved to be on the spot early next morning; and, but for this slight change in his program, the original

plan was as good as ever. The only thing for him to do now was to seek out a good hotel, where he could be sure of not being robbed while he slept.

He was in two minds whether to take a car or to walk. The fascination of the streets decided that question for him, and he turned to follow the road which he had already traversed twice that evening.

He had not gone far when there broke upon his ear the sudden clangor of a bell. At the sound, he noticed, everybody around him turned to look in the direction whence the bell had sounded.

The furious clanging continued, and swelled in intensity, indicating that the bell was coming nearer and nearer. The crowds began to run past him in the direction whence he had just come.

Suddenly a truck drawn by madly careering horses swept into view, and Mr. Horner understood. Somewhere in the vicinity there was a fire, and the engines would come dashing by in a moment.

He turned and joined the rush, which by this time had been outdistanced by the flying ladder-truck. As he ran, he heard the tooting of the approaching engine. It was answered from a distance by the whistle of another engine coming from a down-town station, and soon it swept by with a roar, blazing with heaped fires and showering sparks as it went.

Mr. Horner was quite winded when he reached the corner far down the avenue round which the engine had turned, and he felt decidedly exhausted when he came in sight of the crowd's destination.

As he joined the excited mob on the sidewalk, the hammering of a bell, intermingled with the screaming of a siren, announced the coming of the fire chief.

Flames were pouring out of the windows of what was obviously a tenement-house. Shrieks resounded through the air, and were drowned by the intermittent snort of the engines, of which there were now two on the scene. But the screams continued, and rose above the noise of the street; for in that tenement-house there lived fully a dozen families, and the stairways were barred by the scorching flames, which had found their beginning in the basement.

The fire-escapes, as usual, were

blocked with the multitudinous boxes which the New York tenement dweller seems to collect for the especial purpose of turning his dwelling-place into a fire-trap. Even had the boxes not been there, none who ventured to try descent on the fire-escapes would have lived; for with a crash they fell to the street, rotten with rust, and dislodged from their hold by the swelling of the bricks in the lower part of the wall.

The place was a veritable fiery furnace, and it seemed impossible that any should escape alive. But wonders are the habitual performance of the fire department, and the spellbound crowd outside the fire-lines saw person after person—alive, conscious and struggling, or limp, in the strong arms that bore them—brought down the ladders by the redoubtable men who do that sort of thing for a living.

A shout went up when it became known that all were saved. But the safety of their dear ones seemed insufficient to console some of the inmates who had been snatched from death.

They bemoaned, with loud cries, the loss of their household furniture, and would not be consoled. At every new crash in the interior of the burning building they wailed afresh.

Meanwhile, other engines had come up post-haste, and firemen had been taking preventive measures against the spread of the flames to the surrounding houses. Nearly all the buildings in the immediate neighborhood were of the tenement class, and the sidewalks far and near were thronged with people who had hurried out from their dens at the dread call—"Fire! Fire!"

Many of them bore incongruously selected objects, which they had snatched up in the instant of flight.

But even the presence of firemen on the adjoining roofs was not a sufficient guarantee that the houses would not take fire, and the poor occupants of those buildings hesitated between the fear of death and the desire to return and gather together their belongings. The air resounded with cries in various languages.

Suddenly Mr. Horner, as he gazed, was smitten by a fearful idea. As far as he remembered the geography of the locality, he was sure that the burning

building must be almost at the back of one on the next street, which structure held something that was dearer than life almost to him.

What if the building should catch fire—the block in which Sol Stearns's pawnshop was situated? For the shop, on the ground floor, was without doubt exposed to the peril of flames. Good Lord! What would become of him if his overcoat were to be burned with the rest of the building?

Actuated by these fears, he tore himself away from the vicinity of the fire, and rushed around the block until he came in front of the pawnshop. For a time he danced excitedly on the sidewalk, wondering whether Fate would be so cruel as to rob him of his only chance of existence.

But soon, noticing that there was no sign of flames, he began to recover from his excitement and to be a little ashamed of his previous fears. Presently he turned away, drawn by the curious fascination which a fire exerts over every living being who has once seen the fire-crew at work.

Had he remained a few moments on the ground, he would have seen Sol Stearns, voluble and excited, come running up in the belief that his shop was about to be consumed by fire. This individual was not reassured as to the safety of his premises until he had opened the shop and made a thorough investigation. Even then, he was loath to go away until all possible danger had been averted from the contents of the store.

It is to be surmised that, in that moment of mental agitation, Sol Stearns wished devoutly that he had bought a more expensive safe in which to store jewels and other valuables.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the block, the fire-crew had at last gained the upper hand of the conflagration. The tenement-house had been gutted by the flames, and only the bare walls stood shakily where a short time before twelve families had made their homes.

The hot bricks glowed in the darkness, throwing off an intense heat, which caused the crowd to keep their distance.

Mr. Horner had never before seen a fire handled by the efficient department of New York; therefore, he was much

interested in the proceedings. Consequently, when the crews began to return to their respective trucks, with the exception of the few who still played a moderated stream on the glowing walls, he pushed his way through the crowd in order to get a better view of the brave fellows whose cool execution of duty he had just witnessed.

At length he stood in the very front of the press, where he was forced to shield his eyes from the hot glare of the walls, which flashed the water into steam as soon as it encountered them. So, half blinded, half seeing something that was new and strange to him, he stood until the chief gave the signal to stop the streams.

As the water gurgled with ebbing force on the sidewalk and now on the ground at his very feet, he stepped forward, half impulsively, until the fire-line tightened across his chest.

The man who was handling the huge nozzle nearest him said something which made his fellows laugh. He himself stood with the nozzle in his hands, and chuckled at his own wit. The turning off of the water supply at the distant main caused a last shudder to run along the rapidly flattening hose; and the residue of the stream, shot out by some mysterious internal action in the rubber receptacle, sputtered and fell like a deluge on our unfortunate friend, who got in its way at the precise moment.

Drenched, choking for breath, and wiping the water from his eyes, Mr. Horner staggered off, not heeding the laughter which went up from the crowd who witnessed the accident. He did not recover his breath until he was almost clear of the lines.

His first clear view of things was the sight of one of the engines, which was so close to him that he had almost bumped his nose against it.

The wind which was blowing up the street shifted suddenly with a whirling current, and the unfortunate Mr. Horner found himself gasping and blinded in the midst of the torrent of smoke which poured from the stack of the engine. It was as though a black cloud had been sent from the sky to cover him from the curious gaze of the onlookers who had laughed at his plight.

There were not a few cinders in his eyes and hair when he at last emerged from the "pillar of cloud," and his nostrils were filled with a stinging soot. The insinuating dust, warm from the smoke-stack, had found its way down his neck under his collar, and also into his lungs through his mouth. The very pores of his skin were clogged with it.

But it was not until he reached the corner of the avenue which had been the scene of so many of his hardships, that Mr. Horner fully realized the damage which he had sustained in his encounter with the engine and hose. As he rounded the corner, he happened to catch sight of himself in a small strip of mirror which stood in the window of a clothing-store.

The arc-lamp across the avenue cast a glare of light upon the man and the looking-glass, and Mr. Horner gave vent to an inarticulate cry, wrung from his lips by the sudden and complete understanding of his misfortunes. For the mirror showed him a face which at first sight he could not recognize as his own—a face very like that of a stoker he had seen on the steamer which brought him to New York.

Below the savage looking, begrimed countenance there was the reflected image of something which had once been a white collar. It was now almost as black as the face.

And suddenly there flashed into Mr. Horner's mind a picture of himself as he must appear by daylight—clad in a bedraggled suit which, under the action of water and soot, would bear a close resemblance to the uniform of a chimney-sweep!

CHAPTER VII.

THE POLICE ON THE LOOKOUT.

UNTIL now Mr. Horner had been able to bear with his tribulations, but suddenly his world seemed to grow very dark. For now there seemed to be nothing left in his cup; he had drained it, as he thought, to the dregs.

He was almost desperate from vexation and the sense of being mortified in his own eyes. He was perilously near to losing his self-respect. He felt that it

would be a relief to rail at his evil genius with new and splendid curses—such curses as had never before been heard.

Then it seemed to him that it would comfort him to be able to weep, as he had not wept since he was a very little boy. But both these thoughts he dismissed as being unworthy a Horner, and presently he came to entertain a more temperate view of his ill luck.

First, he had been forced to have his hair cut until it resembled the bristles of a pig, and now his clothes had been ruined by the double accident which had befallen him. He groaned as he thought of the figure he would cut in the morning.

"But perhaps," he reflected, "something else will happen to me before morning, and I shall not care what comes next."

Indeed, on reflection, that seemed to be the best course for him to pursue—to forget all about his troubles, and not to care what happened. For, with such a method of procedure, he had always the sensation that something was bound to occur, and if he would only not care whether it were for good or ill, he would be living perpetually in a state of expectancy.

By all means, this was the most comforting view to take of the situation.

But it would not do to forget that he was still the holder of a trust—the money which belonged to his unknown love. He laughed cynically at himself for thinking the word "love" in his present plight. Nevertheless, it behooved him to find a suitable hotel and sleep there, secure in the thought that the money was safe from robbers. For he could not rid himself of the idea that more hard luck awaited him, and what was there left but the loss of Ethel's purse?

Before going in search of a hotel, however, he recollected that it would be wise to take from the little purse sufficient money to pay for the room, since it was not good policy to display a great deal of money, especially in a purse which was so obviously not his own.

But how much would he need—two dollars, three, five? He had never stayed at a hotel in New York, and he did not know what their prices might be.

At last he decided that the figure could not very well be more than half as large as the price asked at a good hotel in London. So he made up his mind to take five dollars, with the intention of replacing it the very next day.

And now for the first time he got an idea of the amount of money his "lady-love" had been carrying about with her.

For, as has been said, he had looked no further than the fifty-dollar bill which was on the outside of the "roll." But now, under the necessity of taking five dollars from the purse, he was forced to investigate further.

The five-dollar bill was easily found, and after he had placed it carefully in the breast pocket of his wet coat, he counted the total of the remaining bills. The sum amounted to one hundred and ninety-seven dollars, making, with the five which he had abstracted, a total of two hundred and two dollars—a fair-sized sum for a lady to carry about in her hand!

He stood on the corner and waited until a street-car passed bound up-town. As he swung himself on board, he thought again of the figure he would cut in a strong light, and shrank back into the obscurity of the rear platform.

The conductor eyed him curiously as he took his fare, and well he might, for Mr. Horner was a sight to behold.

It required all of his dogged English temper to give him the courage to walk into a first-class hotel and ask for accommodation. He did not heed the snickers which went up from the pages and loungers in the hall, but marched bravely up to the desk and demanded a room, holding the five-dollar bill ostentatiously in his hand.

The clerk looked him over with a grin, and made a signal to the bell-boy who had followed Mr. Horner up to the desk.

"Sorry, mister, but we have no rooms left."

This might have sufficed as an answer, but for the fact that at that very moment a man was signing the register. Then the truth of the matter flashed upon Mr. Horner, and he almost ran out of the place, followed by gales of laughter from the people inside.

Of course it was impossible for him to get accommodation at a good hotel

when he presented himself with a begrimed face and mottled clothes! Why had he not thought of that before?

His train of reflections was interrupted by an exclamation from a loafer, who straightway yelled out to his fellows. Mr. Horner felt that he would again be subjected to the humiliation of being laughed at, and he fled from that brightly lighted street, seeking darkness wherewith to cover his shame.

It was in the darkest part of West Forty-Fourth Street that he stopped at length, wondering where he would sleep that night. His plan for the safety of Ethel's money had been completely upset by the accident with the fire-engine, for it was now out of the question to find rest in a decent hotel.

There remained to him, then, the choice of two evils, each of which was as unpromising as the other. Either he must content himself with a lodging-house of the lowest order, where no questions would be asked, but where he would be in danger of being robbed; or he must give up all thought of sleeping, save for such snatches as he might be able to get in some doorway.

He was puzzled as to the possibility of finding some place where the eye of suspicion or of ridicule would not immediately be thrown on him. At last, out of the chaos of his thoughts he brought what seemed to be a feasible idea.

That was, to go somewhere and remove, as far as possible, the grime from his face and hands. Then, at least, he would be less a figure for fun than he was at present.

He thought of his old haunt, the Grand Central Station; but he felt that to go there would but serve to awaken in him all the thoughts which he had spent the day in forgetting. So presently he found a deserted restaurant of the cheap variety, on Seventh Avenue.

Going in, he requested the loan of their soap and kitchen-sink for a few minutes; and the proprietor, who at first had looked at him askance, was reassured by the sight of the five-dollar bill, which Mr. Horner still held in his hand.

The man led the way back into the stuffy little kitchen, turned on the hot and cold taps, and stood by while Mr. Horner performed his ablutions. Then

he produced a large towel, on which our friend dried his face and hands.

But the desired effect was still far from being obtained, as Mr. Horner learned when he questioned the man regarding the cleanliness of his face. So at it he went again, and it was not until he had almost boiled his face with hot water, and rubbed the skin off his hands with coarse soap, that he succeeded in getting rid of the major portion of his grime.

The most fitting recompense to the kindness of the restaurant proprietor was to purchase something, so Mr. Horner sat down at a table and ordered some refreshment. While this was being prepared, he whiled away the time by reading the news of the day in a soiled newspaper that lay at his hand.

At first he read only the head-lines; then he dipped into the account of the latest murder mystery. Presently, however, he found a story which interested him. For, in glancing over the page, he had caught sight of a familiar number, which he suddenly recalled as the address of the unspeakable Mrs. Moon.

He made haste to look for the beginning of the article, hoping grimly that some one had succeeded in beating her out of a week's rent. That, he remembered, was the phrase she had used in her denunciation of himself.

But the head-line told him nothing, for it said only:

LORAINÉ LOOTED.

Renowned Vaudeville Impersonator Robbed.

Evidently, however, the robbery had occurred at Mrs. Moon's, and that would be of interest to him. So he proceeded to read the story, which grew more and more interesting as he went on.

At some time after one o'clock last night, the rooms which Paul Loraine, the celebrated vaudeville impersonator of women, occupies, were entered by a burglar who was evidently familiar with the premises, and a valuable bracelet stolen while the owner lay asleep in the room beyond.

The mysterious nature of the robbery has caused great speculation on the part of the police who are working on the case. The burglar had presumably made his entrance by the front door,

but the lock had not been forced. The outer door to the suite in which Mr. Loraine has lived only since yesterday afternoon, was found open early this morning by the maid. On investigation, Mr. Loraine proved to be still in bed, and asleep.

The police are looking for a young Englishman, whose name is withheld. This person occupied the rooms until the very morning of the day on which Mr. Loraine rented them, and the landlady, Mrs. Eliza Moon, has informed the police that a suit-case belonging to the young man is also missing. A watch is being kept on all the pawnshops in the city, as it is thought likely that the young man, who is known to be in need of money, will try to realize on the bracelet.

When seen at the Sheraton Theater to-day by a *Star* reporter, Mr. Loraine said that he could not understand why the thief should have rested content with the bracelet; for, although it is valuable, it is not nearly so costly as the magnificent watch which was given to him by his manager as a token of his appreciation of Mr. Loraine's wonderful impersonations. The watch in question was lying on the table in the front room, where Mr. Loraine had left it on retiring.

Mr. Loraine also said that, after having been to a dinner given in his honor, at which he had been requested to appear in female costume, he had returned to his new rooms at a few minutes after one o'clock. As he had worn the bracelet at the dinner, it was a natural conclusion that the robbery had taken place after that hour.

The police are working on the theory that the robber is the young Englishman whom Mrs. Moon suspects, as the landlady has stated that he is still in possession of the keys to the front door and the door of the second-floor front parlor suite, which he occupied until the very morning when Mr. Loraine engaged them.

There is little doubt but that the man is a hardened offender, for he left owing his rent. The police have taken charge of his trunk, which was still in the rooms. It will be opened this afternoon by the detectives employed on the case.

There was a great deal more, to the effect that the robbery was undoubtedly the first of a series which had been planned for that neighborhood, for the

Star was a sensational newspaper, and never missed an opportunity of supposing the impossible.

But Mr. Horner did not read it. The paper had dropped from his hand to the table, and he sat staring before him, his brain in a whirl.

He had not expected such an outcome to his venture as an amateur burglar. But now he saw clearly how he had laid himself open to the grasp of the law, and he shuddered as though he already felt the detective's hand on his shoulder.

Of course, it was now plain that his supposition regarding the bracelet had been the right one. The man, Loraine, had been walking in his sleep, and had dropped the jewel-box into the suit-case, in which it had been taken away by the unknowing burglar.

He could not help heaving a sigh of relief at the thought that, after all, it was not a woman's room which he had invaded at dead of night. Nor could he help marveling a little at the curious occupation of this man, Paul Loraine. To earn one's living by impersonating women—it was absurd, and a little bit unmanly, he thought. The mystery of the silk skirt was solved, anyhow.

What was he to do now? Without doubt he would be arrested, sooner or later, by some enterprising detective. And he would have no one to count upon but the British consul of the port!

He began to be desperate, and the food which he had ordered lay untouched on the table before him. A hundred ideas of flight flashed through his brain.

But suddenly he threw back his head and laughed aloud. For the thought which had come to him was too funny to be resisted.

It was practically impossible for him to be arrested while he kept his mouth shut; for who would recognize in the grimy, filthily-clad man at that table the once dapper Mr. Horner, whose appearance the landlady had doubtless described in detail to the police?

There was no question in the matter. Unless his English accent aroused suspicion in the mind of some one who overheard him speak, he was safe from the fear of arrest. All he had to do would be to say as little as possible, and disguise his voice as well as he could.

Decidedly, his misfortune had its advantages, for he himself would never have been able to adopt such an effective disguise as this with which chance had supplied him. But it had its drawbacks.

For he would never dare to accost his lady in these clothes, should he see her again. Also, it would be impossible for him to get work while he was dressed thus—at least, work of the kind he desired.

Then, too, would he be able to obtain his overcoat from the pawn-shop? Suppose the man should recall the well-dressed person who had pawned it the evening before, and should refuse to deliver it over to this shabby fellow, even in exchange for the ticket? What if he should be accused of having stolen the ticket? Was it worth while taking the risk of being arrested on suspicion?

But, hang it!—he must have that coat, for without it he could not get hold of Aunt Ellen's remittance. For the sake of obtaining that money, on account of which he had already suffered so much, he felt that he would undergo any ordeal. He must get it at once. He could hardly wait until daylight, so anxious was he.

He made an attempt to eat the food which lay before him, then he paid his bill and went out into the street.

For the sake of security he replaced the five-dollar bill in the purse, and put the latter back into his inner waistcoat pocket, buttoning his coat over the whole. At least, it would be difficult for any one to rob him without his being aware of the attempt.

He sat down to rest in an obscure doorway, and presently he fell asleep, to dream queer dreams about the lady and the suit-case and a horrible barber who insisted on shaving his scalp. So he passed a very restless night, and at last, about seven o'clock next morning, he awoke, stiff with cold, to find a policeman standing over him. At the word of command he moved on.

He ate breakfast at the place where he had read the newspaper the night before, and wandered down the avenue, striking off presently into Broadway. Here he loitered leisurely until it should be time to go to Sol Stearns's for his overcoat.

He was passing a haberdashery store when he caught a glimpse of his appearance in a mirror. It was a complete and effective disguise, but he groaned at the thought that he must continue in that way for many days. At any rate, when he got his coat he could cover up the blackened collar and some of the shabbiness.

At about a quarter past eight he came into the familiar neighborhood of the park where he had slept that morning when he was robbed. As he looked at the large clock on the sidewalk, his attention was arrested by the sight of a long line of people in front of a near-by building.

A couple of policemen were trying their best to preserve order, but the crowd seemed to increase in the vicinity of the doors. Mr. Horner looked at the sign over them, and once again at the excited crowd. Then he understood, for he had seen a similar thing before in London.

It was a bank run!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NERVE OF MR. HORNER.

If Mr. Horner had not been so much perturbed about his own welfare during the past three or four days, he would have known that the tightness of the money market was tending toward a financial crisis, and that many people, incited to fear by the newspaper reports, were in a condition of panic—like a herd of steers about to stampede.

But this he did not know; therefore it was a great surprise to him to find that a bank run was in progress in this wealthy city. He knew, by his own experience at the time of the great run on the Sacherel Bank in London, what terror and discomfort there would be during the next few days unless the bank directors should be able to convince their depositors that everything was all right.

For it is a curious thing that intelligent people will invariably behave like a flock of silly sheep when their money interests are concerned. If one bank goes, its branches will surely go, too, and many another banking institution can look out for trouble.

Although it was not yet nine o'clock, there were several hundred people around the bank building. Not all of these, of course, were depositors; but everybody took a lively interest in the proceedings, seeming to make it his business to keep the police on the lookout.

In such cases it is usual to avoid a crush by giving numbered tickets to the depositors in the order of their arrival. But this was the very beginning of the panic, and the officials were not ready for the assault which was being made upon their resources.

Therefore, the only way in which order might be preserved was to make each newcomer take a place at the end of the line.

The same instinct of curiosity which had caused a crowd of onlookers to collect and hamper the police in their efforts to maintain order, caused Mr. Horner to approach and take a closer view of the proceedings. His presence was noted with disapproval by one of the officers, and as he proceeded along the outskirts of the crowd he was frowned upon by the others.

For it was obvious that this very dirty looking specimen of the tramp variety could have no personal interest in what was taking place.

About a dozen paces from the very head of the line, a well-dressed and important looking gentleman was standing, shifting about on his feet, and evidently ill at ease. And well he might be, for it was approaching the hour of a very important engagement which he had made, and he had no intention of breaking the appointment, although he was loath to give up his place in the line.

It so happened that his patience had reached its limit at the very moment when Mr. Horner passed at his elbow. The gentleman, accustomed to judge men swiftly, took another look at the man with the clean face and the soiled clothes, and beckoned to him.

Mr. Horner stopped, and a short conversation took place, with the result that the gentleman went off to keep his appointment, and our friend stepped into the line in his stead. The arrangement was to benefit Mr. Horner to the extent of ten dollars when the gentleman returned to take his place again.

Mr. Horner was highly elated at his good fortune. It was not every day that he had the opportunity of earning ten dollars so easily. Things were looking up, he thought.

And it was decidedly a compliment to his honesty of face that he had been picked out to fill the place. Evidently his begrimed clothes did not matter where integrity was concerned.

But his confident assurance suffered a shock when, a few moments later, the man directly in front of him also seemed to recollect an engagement; for he glanced about for some one to keep his place for him. A very unkempt and villainous-looking tramp volunteered his services for a promise of five dollars, and Mr. Horner's pride was in the dust. It was clear that honest faces did not figure in the matter at all.

It was a long wait, for the bank officials were deliberate and cautious in their movements. Their policy was to spend as much time as possible in paying out deposits, in order to have opportunity to bolster up the bank's resources by borrowing money from other institutions. And so almost an hour elapsed before any perceptible advance in the line was made.

Everybody was growing restless, even Mr. Horner being unable to resist chafing at the delay. For, much as he desired to earn the ten dollars, he was anxious to get away to the pawn-shop and redeem his overcoat. That was the most important consideration for him.

The crowd had increased but little, for while many late arrivals had come on the scene, many of the disinterested onlookers had gone about their business. The line now extended half way around the block, but the press on the sidewalk had thinned.

An excited individual came bustling along the line, offering to buy the place of this and that man or woman. But he was unsuccessful, and by the time he came abreast of Mr. Horner his offer had assumed large proportions.

"Fifty dollars for a good place in the line!" he yelled at the top of his voice.

The tramp who had taken the place immediately ahead of Mr. Horner detained him.

"Make it sixty, boss, and de place is

yourn. I ain't got but sixty in de bank and I hates to lose it. I'm a poor man."

Mr. Horner was thunderstruck. He had never dreamed that such villainy was possible. The man had volunteered to keep the place for his employer for the consideration of five dollars, and now he was giving it up to a stranger for sixty!

He would not stand quietly by and see this piece of villainy perpetrated.

But by the time he found his voice, the tramp was already moving away, hugging his newly acquired wealth; and the stranger had assumed the place in the line, with a fat sigh of relief, evidently considering that he had made a very good bargain. He turned sharply as our friend touched him on the shoulder.

"I beg your pardon, but you've been done—I—I mean cheated," stammered Mr. Horner. "That fellow was only keeping the place for another man."

The stranger's jaw dropped, and he seemed about to swear, but soon he recovered himself, and only said, "Too bad. Hard luck for the other fellow, that's all. But I wish you had told me before. I might have bought the place cheaper. Good bargain, anyhow." With this he turned his back upon his informant.

Here again was something that Mr. Horner could not believe possible. This man in front of him was too cold-blooded to think of anything save his own money. He did not see that there were very decided ethics in the case. Had the fellow no sense of business honor?

The question was settled in the most unlooked-for manner, for suddenly Mr. Horner caught sight of the lawful owner of the place, who had run all the way in the fear that perhaps his turn had come and gone. He was scrutinizing everybody in the line before our friend, whom he seemed to recognize. Suddenly he sprang forward and accosted the man who had made the deal with the tramp.

"How in thunder did you get here? That's my place! Where's the black-guard I left in charge? Get out, or I'll call the cop." He began to push and struggle with the interloper, who resisted vigorously. The fray had begun.

A stalwart policeman came up to see what was the matter, and endeavored to

part the contestants, but succeeded only in receiving two or three blows, many of which were being exchanged by the now highly excited men who were indulging in a free fight. The guardian of the peace stood amazed for one second; then his club appeared, and the battle was between three instead of two.

And, since wood is more unyielding than flesh, he presently became the victor in the triangular struggle, but not without having sustained considerable damage. With the help of another policeman who came up, he dragged both the beaten fighters out of the line, and everybody gave a sigh of satisfaction; for each was now one step nearer the desired goal—the paying-teller's window.

But Mr. Horner's sympathies went out to the unfortunate lawful owner of the place, for he knew by sad experience what it was to suffer through no fault of one's own. He had no time to indulge in these reflections, however, for there suddenly appeared before his embarrassed eyes a vision which had haunted all his dreams. It was *she*!

She came sauntering along the sidewalk, her little head in the air. In less than fifteen seconds she would be face to face with Mr. Horner, whose heart was racing madly.

Nearer and nearer she came, apparently unconscious of the longing looks which her unknown lover was bestowing upon her. Now she was almost abreast of him, and he dropped his eyes.

He felt rather than saw her by his side, and suddenly all his pulses leaped. He remembered only that she was there, within his reach, and that he had a sufficiently good reason for speaking to her.

He forgot all about his awful clothes, and the memory of his blackened collar troubled him not at all. Now to follow her and speak to her!

He had stepped impulsively out of the line before he recollected that he was in a position of trust; but when the thought of his employer came to him, he sprang backward, willing to let his lady pass and be lost, if only he did not break his word to the man who had trusted him.

But he was too late. The line had already closed up behind him, and he stood staring helplessly at the watchful

and determined men who had taken advantage of his moment of indecision.

It was no time to wring his hands in despair. He had been as guilty as the ignorant tramp, for the latter had only taken money for betraying his trust, while he had allowed pleasure to interfere with his obvious duty. What was he to do to clear his sense of honor?

It is impossible to say what he might have done, for his evil genius, bent upon harassing him, came to his rescue with the penalty of blows, which proved a sufficient punishment for his delinquency.

For his employer had returned to the scene just in time to see him apparently step out of the line, and indignation filled the breast of that worthy gentleman. He did not wait for explanations, but made his presence and his wrath known to Mr. Horner at one and the same time, by means of a savage blow that sent our friend sprawling.

As Mr. Horner jumped up and looked around him, rather dazedly, to find his assailant, he saw only the indignant back of his late employer, who was being directed by an officer of the law to take his place at the rear end of the line, or suffer the consequences of disobedience.

Our friend understood perfectly that the punishment of his fault had been visited upon him, and he saw that explanations might involve him in the excited colloquy which was taking place between the policeman and his employer. So he decided that he had already stayed too long in that place, and that it would be the better for his health if he got away from the vicinity.

He surprised himself with the celerity of his movements during the next few seconds. It was well that everybody around him was too intent upon his own affairs to take any notice of him, for he was almost running, in his haste to catch up with Ethel Stone, and a cry of "Stop thief!" might easily have been raised.

When he caught sight of her again, she was two blocks ahead of him, but going slowly, with the air of one who is not in a hurry. The instant he saw her, his heart began to go pit-a-pat in the approved fashion of those who are madly in love with some one to whom they have never spoken. As he rapidly overtook her, he experienced a sudden shyness.

For the thought of his dingy clothes returned to him, and he became embarrassed. It would not do to accost her while she was walking, for his appearance might frighten her. Therefore, he would wait until she stopped to look into some window, and then he would take the purse from his pocket and hold it so that she could not fail to see it.

His train of thought was suddenly broken, for she exhibited every indication of stopping at the window of a picture store.

Ah, she was fond of pictures! Of course she would be, for she was herself a picture. Now's the time, thought our friend, and he hastened toward the window, his hand upon the purse in his pocket.

Too late! She was turning away. No, she was stopping again. Now or never!

His knees shook under him; he was actually afraid to speak to her. He pulled himself together and reached for the purse, but at that moment, having apparently made up her mind that she liked one of the pictures, she turned and entered the store.

He breathed freely again. Now he could look at her through the glass, and feast his eyes on her while he coaxed his courage to the point of speaking.

He watched her as she waited until the attendant should finish serving another customer; he saw her drum with her little fingers upon the happy counter. The man came up and spoke to her—how dare he! Mr. Horner watched, entranced, while her lips—the most kissable lips in the world—moved as she spoke to the shopman.

At last, unable longer to look at those tantalizing lips, he turned away his eyes and took careful note of the trim dress, the bewitching bonnet and the one dainty shoe which peeped out from under her skirt. When again he dared to look at her face, she had finished talking with the man, and was on the point of coming out of the store.

Mr. Horner nerved himself.

She came tripping out, and with a shaking hand he held the purse conspicuously at arm's length.

She stopped, hesitated, and then turned crimson. Mr. Horner, seeing the

blush of embarrassment on her face, proceeded to duplicate it on his own countenance. Neither spoke, but each understood that something of import was about to happen.

Mr. Horner raised his hat, and approached her. "I must beg your pardon for speaking to you, Miss Stone," he began, nearly biting his tongue off in the endeavor to prevent himself from saying "Ethel."

He stammered for a while, and then recovered his self-possession.

"I saw you drop this in the station yesterday; then I lost sight of you; and I have taken the liberty of opening it, in the hope that by so doing I might find a clue to your address. Permit me to return it to you."

She also had recovered from her embarrassment. In the sweetest voice in the world, as he had predicted to himself, she thanked him. Then for the first time her eyes lighted upon his clothes, and she stopped, in confusion.

He saw the glance and interpreted it.

"I have had an accident, and must make excuses for my appearance. I hope you will forgive me for having spoken your name." He could have kicked himself for being so stiff and painfully formal.

But she came to the rescue. She saw that here was evidently a gentleman, and an English gentleman—for that accent was not to be mistaken. She must put him at his ease.

"I can't thank you enough," she said in that delightfully ravishing voice. "For there is a good deal of money in this purse, and I was afraid I had lost it forever. How can I reward you? Won't you tell me your name, so I can thank you properly?"

She beamed upon him as she spoke.

"My name is Henry Horner," he replied, and in that instant he was possessed of the wildest idea that ever entered a man's head. "You must not thank me, Miss Stone," he continued, "for I have done nothing but what any other man would have done. But if you wish to reward me, you will—you will—please call me—only once—please, for Heaven's sake, call me Harry!"

He blurted out the conclusion of the sentence, and blushed hotly.

She laughed merrily at his unique proposal. He took heart at her merriment, and continued, in a rather calmer voice: "I've been in this city nearly a month, and in all that time I've never heard my name. It would be the greatest favor you could do me, and I do deserve a reward after you have offered to give me one! Can't you pretend that I'm your chauffeur, or something? Only once, please!"

She tried in vain to check her laughter, deciding that she liked this outspoken Englishman. There was a dash of romance in her nature, and by birth and breeding she was, as the men of her family said, a "true sport."

So she replied to him, in merry vein, "I will, on one condition—that you tell me first how you had the courage to make such an absurd proposal."

Then it was, that Mr. Horner, carried away by the intoxication of her presence, forgot that they were standing in front of a window on the aristocratic avenue. He plunged headlong into a narrative of his woes, emboldened by the undeniable look of interest and sympathy in her eyes.

He could not help smiling when, at the mention of his misfortunes with the fire-engine, she bubbled with laughter. And he was still smiling when, in conclusion, he said:

"So you see, I've had some hard knocks, and I'm afraid of nothing any more. Even the fear of frightening you did not deter me from speaking to you. Oh, I'm brave—very brave," he continued with mock heroism.

"So I see," she replied, "and your bravery makes me brave also. Now I'm going to be very rude, Mr.—Harry! There, I've done it! I can't help seeing that for some reason you have not told me the whole story. Oh, I know I'm fearfully rude; but once my brother was in Chicago for three days without money, and ever since that time I've wanted to do for some one what a girl there did for him. She made friends with him, and helped him until he got money from home."

She blushed crimson, and put the purse impulsively into his hand.

"Please take it back, and when you get on your feet, you can return the

money to me! Won't you, please? I shall be angry if you don't. It's as good as yours, anyway, for you found it."

Mr. Horner was flabbergasted. For his world was falling about his ears. He knew that no English girl would be so impulsive toward a total stranger. But he felt that he could worship her for it, and yet it would not do to accept her offer.

"I don't know how to thank you," he stammered. "You're very good, but really—well, I'll compromise with you," he continued as he saw a look of disappointment come into her face.

He opened the little purse.

"If you will let me take this," he said, pulling out a two-dollar bill.

She started to speak, but he forestalled her.

"It's all I shall need, really. And I'll take it only on condition that you'll allow me to return it to-day. Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, anything you say!" she returned hastily. "But are you sure you won't need more? Hadn't you better take it all? And you won't think me very rude, will you?"

"Rude! Dear lady, you are the first person who has said a kind word to me, and I thank you for it! It is I who should fear that I have been rude. Won't you please forgive me?"

Although scarcely ten minutes had elapsed since the first word had been spoken between them, they were as much at their ease as though they had been friends for years, and their parting was almost entirely free from embarrassment.

For they really did part at last, but not before it had been agreed that Harry, as we must name him hereafter in accordance with Ethel's example, should call that evening at a certain wonderful house.

He would not embarrass her by accompanying her when she stepped out and hailed a passing taxicab, but remained on the sidewalk, hat in hand, watching until she was out of sight. Then, resisting a desire to kiss the pavement where she had stood, to throw his hat into the air for joy, and to do many other foolish things, he hastened away to do that which must be done.

For it was now more important than ever that he should get possession of money, so that he might have his clothes cleaned and buy some new linen.

And it would not be long before the money from his partner arrived. Then he would be able to appear correctly dressed, for he could afford even expensive clothes.

Half an hour after she left his side, he was standing with one foot on the threshold of Sol Stearns's shop, within which lay the overcoat that was to be his salvation. Thanks to Ethel's generosity, he had in his possession exactly three dollars and seventy-five cents. It would cost him probably two-sixty of that to redeem his coat, and ten cents for Aunt Ellen's letter. Then—one hundred dollars would be his!

His troubles were over!

CHAPTER IX.

THE DECISION OF JOLLY JIMMY.

THERE were four or five persons in the pawn-shop when Harry entered. One of these was a woman engaged in redeeming some of her belongings. Another was a small, dark man, who was evidently desirous of purchasing some of the forfeited goods that were spread out on a counter in the rear of the shop. He was standing with his back half turned toward the door, looking at a variety of knives, glassware, and such things, on the table before him.

An attendant came forward and glanced at the ticket which Harry held out to him. He raised his brows when he saw that the date on which the article was pledged was the previous day. Then he went back along the counter to the rear of the shop, and came out again, after a time, bringing the overcoat. On his way he stopped to say something to the man who was inspecting the sales counter.

The attendant took the three dollars which Harry handed him, told him that the cost would be two dollars and fifty-five cents, and turned to the desk to have the cashier make change. He returned with the change and handed it to Harry before giving him the coat.

Our friend held out his hand for his

property, but turned as he felt a touch on his shoulder.

It was the man who had been so interested in the knives and other things. In a low voice he said to Harry:

"Your name Horner?"

Somewhat astonished, but courteously inclined, the young Englishman answered in the affirmative.

"Not Henry Horner?" queried the man.

The answer was the same as that to the previous question. Harry was growing nervous, suspecting some trick.

"Address at ——," and he mentioned Mrs. Moon's number.

"Why, what do you want?" inquired Harry, now thoroughly mystified.

"You," replied the man, as he opened his coat and showed a silver badge. "You are under arrest, on suspicion of being wanted by the police. I warn you to make no attempt at resistance."

Arrest! Good Heavens! The truth flashed upon Harry like lightning from a clear sky.

It was the business of the bracelet! He had never thought of this.

And yet, the paper he had read last night had stated that a watch was being kept on all pawn-shops! But how did the man know his name so readily? Of course, from the pawn-ticket. The attendant must have told him.

He turned to his captor.

"What do you want me for?" he asked, as quietly as possible.

"For stealing a bracelet, and for burglary—that is, breaking and entering. You know."

"But, look here! Let me explain. I never—" Harry was floundering on, giving himself away by his actions, when the man restrained him.

The plain-clothes detective—for such he was—was about to say something, when Harry, who had been staring at the door, uttered a cry of astonishment. The door had opened, and a man entered, bearing a suit-case—the very suit-case that had been the cause of so much pother.

"I'll go with you," said Harry to the detective, "but if you want to make a real arrest get that man with the suit-case. The bracelet is in that bag!"

The detective was under the impression

that his prisoner was playing with him, and was about to turn a deaf ear to his words, when he noticed that the man with the suit-case, suspecting that something was wrong, had begun to retreat toward the door. Accordingly, he sprang forward and nabbed him before he had time to get away.

The suit-case dropped to the floor, and one of the attendants jumped forward and secured it.

Such a scene had probably never taken place in Sol Stearns's shop before, and he did not like it. He came bustling from behind the counter.

"Here—vas is? I let you stay here to catch a t'ief, but not to bother my customers. You haf your man. Take him, and go. Vas is der matter now?"

The detective explained that he would search that suit-case without further ado.

"But you haf no search-variant! How can you search on my premises mitout one?" yelled Sol Stearns, who knew exactly how far the law protected him in his trade.

But the detective did not reply to the question. Instead, he took a double turn of his captives' collars around his fingers, and requested the pawnbroker to open the suit-case. This the man refused to do, and no amount of argument or threat could persuade him.

Thereupon the detective took a whistle from his pocket and blew it. The call was answered in a short time by the policeman on the beat, who came running into the shop with his club ready for action.

The officer showed his badge, and directed the policeman to take charge of the prisoners. He himself then took the suit-case from the unwilling pawnbroker, and the procession marched out into the street.

Poor Harry's brain was whirling. Would his ill luck never cease? No matter what he did, or how innocently he conducted himself, he was always getting into trouble!

This was the second time in two days that he had been arrested. He had got off once by means of a remarkable coincidence; what would happen this time he could not guess.

The sole consolation which he had was the fact that the attendant in the shop had thrust the coat into his hands as he came out in the grip of the policeman.

But perhaps it would be taken from him when he arrived at the station-house.

Certainly that would happen if he were sent to jail. And he had not a single friend to appeal to for aid, if he were so lucky as to be fined instead of being imprisoned. For he would never let Ethel know that he had been arrested in a pawnshop.

The detective had sent in a call for the "hurry-up wagon," and once again Harry had to give his pedigree to a stern-faced sergeant, who wanted to know whether he had even been arrested before. The stern face was very grave indeed when the information was elicited that the prisoner had been discharged from a police court only the day before. Evidently the sergeant regarded him as an old offender.

But when further particulars of the arrest were asked for, and he stated the whole case, his heart lightened a little at the thought that possibly he might be able to obtain protection at the hands of his father's friend, the magistrate who had discharged him. At least, the record of the case and the testimony of the magistrate would prove that he had been arrested because he was looking for a suit-case—his own.

And the detectives would bear witness that he had recognized the suit-case as soon as he saw it. But—and here was a fearful indiscretion—he had concealed the fact that the bag contained a bracelet. Indeed, he had distinctly said that such and such were the contents of the satchel. That looked bad.

He could only account for the presence of the bracelet in his bag by telling the whole story of the sleep-walker; and who would believe that? Would it be better to pretend ignorance? No, the truth would be best, even if it involved him in more and more explanations.

At length the turn of the other prisoner came. He gave his name and address surlily enough, and burst into a voluble protestation of his innocence.

The sergeant looked interested when he perceived that the man did not satisfactorily account for the possession of the suit-case.

Another wait ensued before the case was brought forward in the precinct court. They were to be arraigned merely

as a formality, to give them an opportunity of securing bail if possible.

Harry had almost given up hope of escaping sentence to be held until the case could be presented in due form, for there was small chance that he, a stranger, should be able to procure bail. He did not know the workings of American civil law, and so was at a disadvantage.

He felt more concerned about breaking his promise to see Ethel that night than about anything else. But, just as he reached the depths of despair, he saw in the court-room a face which sent a thrill through him.

Among the many policemen on hand he recognized the genial Irishman who had arrested him the day before for disorderly conduct. His earnest gaze attracted the attention of this Rafferty, who was present for the purpose of laying a charge against another prisoner.

The man stared at young Horner, rubbed his eyes as though trying to recall the fellow, and came forward to take a closer look at him. He thought he knew the face, but the clothes puzzled him. For the man whom he had arrested the day before had been well-dressed, and this fellow was clad in very dirty raiment.

After he had stared for some time at the prisoner, the policeman went up to the detective and asked him a question. When he heard that the fellow's name was Horner he was no longer in doubt about the matter. Accordingly, being a kindly man, and remembering in what an extraordinary case the prisoner had figured so recently, he came up to Harry and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Can't kape out av throuble, can yez?" he began, in his rich brogue. "Will it be disorderly conduct again, then? Phwat's the charrge this toime?"

Harry took hope from the kindly voice and the smile. After all, he had not done anything very wrong, although circumstances were decidedly against him. Hurdledly he explained the situation to Rafferty.

Nothing but the latter's respect for the court kept him from bursting into a roar of laughter.

"Is ut so?" he said, when he had recovered his composure. "You'll get tin years, mebbe. Leastways, yez will onless Rafferty takes a hand. Now, don't

be downhearted ; tell the truth, an' shame the divil. Th' old man there is Jolly Jimmy ; did ye niver hear tell av him? Make him laugh, an' niver a day will ye get. 'Twill be dischargged, or raymanded in care of counsil, at the very worrst!"

He patted Harry reassuringly on the back.

What he said was perfectly true. The magistrate of that court was the most popular of his kind in New York—a man who always gave the prisoner the benefit of the doubt.

He was polishing off the cases at the rate of about two to the minute, and hardly a prisoner but succeeded in making the magistrate laugh. Only the hardened offenders came in for any sentence at all.

Almost all the others were, as Rafferty had said, discharged or remanded in care of counsel, selected from among the many lawyers who lounged about the court-room.

At last the double case came up, and Harry and the surly man stood up before Jolly Jimmy. Rafferty was in close attendance. He had signaled the magistrate that he was interested in the affair, and stood ready to help out his former prisoner.

First, the detective charged Harry on suspicion of breaking and entering Mrs. Moon's house, stating that the prisoner had acknowledged the truth of the charge. But, if the court so pleased, he believed that there was an interesting story back of it. The two prisoners were charged together because the suit-case in evidence had to do with them both.

The magistrate directed his questions to Harry's fellow prisoner, who could give no clear account of the way in which the bag had come into his possession. Then a detective who had been scrutinizing the man volunteered the evidence that the fellow was an old offender, one Jersey Mike by name.

Jolly Jimmy then asked to hear Harry's story, and listened with growing interest while the Englishman told of the entrance into the house, of the sleep-walker who dropped the bracelet into the suit-case, and of the theft of the check. He went on to state that he had hastened to the depot only to find that the suit-case had been taken away.

Encouraged by the look of interest on Jolly Jimmy's face, and by the murmured commendation of Rafferty in the background, Harry proceeded with the story of his arrest for having assaulted Mr. Hughes in the street. Rafferty nodded to the magistrate that this was the truth.

Young Horner went on with his tale, relating how he had pawned his overcoat and had discovered that without it he could not identify himself at the post-office.

When he told of his experiences with the fire-engine a smile began to dawn on the face of Jolly Jimmy. It became a genuine laugh when the magistrate heard the story of the arrest in the pawn-shop.

With a sudden question the other prisoner was confounded into stammering a lame denial to the charge that he had stolen the check from Harry's pocket. He said that he had found it in the street about an hour before trying to pawn the bag. It was an obvious lie.

Jolly Jimmy was noted for his quick decisions, but the reporters who thronged around Harry Horner afterward said that they had never known the magistrate to decide a case so promptly and so fairly.

For when, after he had told his story, Harry ventured to look at the face of the judge, he saw there an irrepressible laugh, and he heard the jolly fellow thunder out:

"By Jupiter! Mr. Horner, I've sat here for six years, and I've never heard a more marvelous set of happenings. You've had enough hard luck. Not for worlds would I add to your troubles. Prisoner, you are discharged, with a warning not to let it happen again!"

Confounded by the turn his fortunes had taken, Harry could hardly thank the magistrate. But he was more surprised when, as he quitted the bar, Jolly Jimmy detained him to ask whether he would press the charge of theft against his fellow prisoner.

Harry really pitied the fellow, and the memory of his own hard luck bade him deal tenderly with his despoiler. So he entreated the magistrate to discharge the captive.

But Jolly Jimmy shook his head, for the man was a hardened criminal of the petty order, and jail was too good a place for him.

The reporters crowded around Harry to get his story, which they declared with one accord to be the best yarn of the year. It took him some time to get rid of them, but at last he succeeded in so doing.

As he turned away he felt a hand on his arm, and turned to see Rafferty and the detective.

"Didn't I tell yez to make him laugh?" whispered the Irishman. "'Tis a foine yarn ye tell, I'm thinking. But will yez be fergetting yer clothes? Ye nade a change of r-raiment. Here's yer bag."

Harry looked at the suit-case in astonishment.

"I—I don't understand," he stammered. "Doesn't it go in evidence against that man?"

The detective intervened, and proved himself a humorist.

"We've enough evidence to hold him on without that, and Jolly Jimmy tipped us the wink to give you your duds. I've taken out the bracelet. It will be returned to Mr. Paul Loraine, the owner."

He leaned forward impressively, as though to whisper a secret.

"Your face is still dirty," he said. "Don't attempt to wash it; it'll do no good. Try a shave!"

And so the whole thing ended with a laugh. Rafferty and the detective were still smiling at the latter's joke when Harry went out of the court-room with the ill-fated suit-case in his hand and the troublesome overcoat over his arm.

The way lay clear now to ease and comfort—and Ethel. For he remembered with a thrill of joy the beautiful shirts and the blue serge suit that reposed in the bag—fine raiment indeed.

Now to get Aunt Ellen's letter, pay Mrs. Moon, clean up, and wait for the evening.

CHAPTER X.

MISS STONE IS AT HOME.

HARRY's heart was bounding wildly as he took the shortest cut toward City Hall Square. He smiled gleefully for no apparent cause, and when he transferred to a Broadway down-town car he was beaming so kindly upon the world at

large that an old woman who sat beside him patted him on the arm and said she was glad he was so happy, for it made her happy only to see him smile. She meant it, too.

When he got off the car, opposite the general post-office, he did not have to be directed to his destination, as he had been on the occasion of his former visit to the place. Instead, he bounded across the sidewalk and ran up the steps to the second floor three at a time.

There was the usual line of people extending around the room, awaiting their turn at the general-delivery window. He was now even more impatient than he had been on his last visit here, for then he had only hoped that good fortune was awaiting him, but now he knew for certain that his luck had turned.

At last he reached the window, and asked for the letter addressed to "Mr. Henry Horner." The clerk took a lot of envelopes from the same "H" pigeon-hole as before, and ran through them swiftly. Harry watched him as letter after letter passed from one hand to the other, remembering how his heart had sunk when, the day before, only two or three letters remained to be looked at, and how it had leaped up again when the desired missive had been found.

Yes, there it was! The clerk looked at it as he separated it from the pile, and glanced up with a grin.

"Oh, you're the man with the coat!" he said, smiling broadly as he recalled the ludicrous incident of the day before. "Ten cents, please. And, say, it's lucky you came in to-day, because the regulations provide that letters uncalled-for shall be sent to another department, and that would mean a lot more worry for you. That's right. Just sign here, and give your address."

Harry, having no definite address, cast quickly around in his mind for one, and decided that he would have the satisfaction of staying at the hotel where he had been refused admittance on the previous night. So he gave his address as the Splendide, took the letter, smiled a goodbye at the clerk, and departed joyfully to the outer corridor, where he opened the letter and took out its contents.

These were a sight-draft—wise old Aunt Ellen! any one else would have sent

a thirty days' draft—for twenty-five pounds, and a short scrawl in the old lady's sprawling handwriting. The letter said that Aunt Ellen wished him well in his new venture, and that the enclosure, for five pounds more than he had asked, was not a loan, but a present, and he must not offer to pay it back.

The draft was drawn on a well-known London correspondent of the New York clearing-house, and it only remained for him to establish his identity in order to cash it. But it was already four o'clock, and all banks would be closed. If he wanted money, as he did, he would have to find some way in which to realize on the draft.

Fortunately, on reflection he concluded that this would be fairly easy to do; and so it proved. For when he called on the banking firm of Hartridge & Lodge, who had promised him a position when times got better, the head of the firm, whom he had interviewed, remembered him.

Harry very diffidently explained to the old gentleman the reason why he had come to see him, and it was speedily arranged that he should receive an advance of fifty dollars on his draft.

But this was not the last of his good luck that day, for after the matter had been adjusted the head of the firm told him that they had decided to take on another man at the end of the month, and that he could consider himself engaged.

Harry thanked the kindly old gentleman for his interest in the matter, and went out of the private office a few minutes later the richer by fifty dollars.

He was somewhat astonished that, in such a time of tight money, he had succeeded in getting cash so easily; but the matter was explained when he reflected that English gold or gold-bearing drafts were the very thing for which every bank in town was looking. So while he sat telling the head of the firm some of his experiences, thereby causing the old gentleman to shake with merriment, the head clerk in the outer office was giving thanks to his gods for even this small amount of English gold, regarding it as a sign of better times to come.

All the way up-town in the Subway Harry dreamed lovely dreams of *her*. He

got off at a certain station, carrying his suit-case, and walked over to the refined mansion of Mrs. Moon, where he rang the bell and was admitted by the old lady herself.

She gasped in astonishment at seeing him, and when he produced a twenty-dollar bill and asked her to take her due out of that, her usual cold, sniffing manner changed, and she became almost cordial.

He explained to her as briefly as possible that he had recovered his suit-case from a pawn-shop where a thief had taken it. Then he directed that his trunk should be sent at once to the Splendide, and would not listen to her efforts to induce him to stay and occupy the first-floor back, which had fallen vacant that morning.

"Another man kicked out," he said to himself when he heard this.

It did not take him very long, after he had settled with the landlady, to go over to the Splendide and engage a room. As his soiled suit and collar were now hidden by an overcoat, no questions were asked as to his ability to pay.

After he had been shown up by an obsequious bell-boy, he made haste to take the long-delayed bath for which his very soul craved. While he was still splashing about it occurred to him that perhaps a careful barber might be able to coax his hair into something like a decent appearance.

So, when he had put on the gorgeous raiment which he took from the suit-case, he went down to the writing-room, where he enclosed a two-dollar bill to the cabman whom he had cheated, addressing it to the man by the number of his cab, in care of the cab company. Then he sought out the barber-shop, and found, to his satisfaction, that short hair was all the style for men at the moment.

He lounged about the lobby and the smoking-room, trying with the aid of his cherished brier to calm himself against the arrival of his trunk. When at last it came and had been brought up to his room, he dived into it and extracted from its depth a suit of evening-clothes which the valet must needs carefully press and clean before the owner's fastidious taste was satisfied.

The hour of seven found him dining

not too extravagantly, but well, in the gilded restaurant down-stairs. Afterward he smoked his brier in his own room, out of respect for the fashion which decrees that a pipe and evening-dress do not go together.

At precisely half past eight a deferential voice called through the telephone that Mr. Horner's cab was even then at the door.

This was the only real extravagance that he had allowed himself. Everything else that he had done had been merely due to his instinct for good things; but the sensation of rolling up to Ethel's home in a hansom was too delightful to be dispensed with.

Besides, was he not now a business man, engaged by one of the best firms in town at a very good salary? And he was a gentleman of means, too—or would be, when the remittance from his partner arrived.

It was a stately house on the avenue at which the cab stopped. Harry dismounted, paid the driver, and went up the steps with his heart in his mouth. He was going to see *her*!

She came in almost immediately after he had been ushered into a beautiful drawing-room. On either side there was a distinct effort at imitating the greeting of old friends, but each of them felt a little nervous, and Cupid, ever on the job, heard two hearts beating high, and chuckled with satisfaction.

This otherwise accurate history has neglected to state that Harry was in the Adonis class—what they call a “ripping good-looker.” And so the shortness of his hair, which had been deftly smoothed by the hotel barber, detracted not at all from his appearance. And the rogue knew it, too.

But she! To this day Harry will never be able to give a concise description of her appearance.

He was more certain than ever that her height was as he had said—five feet five and three-sixteenths inches. He had been correct in his guess about the color of her eyes; they were, as he had seen that afternoon, of a heavenly blue. And her voice was as he had imagined it, only much more wonderful.

At first they talked of that safe subject, the weather; for each was too diffi-

dent to take the lead in making such a conversation as was bound to ensue. But presently Dan Cupid, who hovered now above the young lady, now above Harry, took a hand in the game and set them both to blushing.

For Ethel made a reference to the day before, in the station, that brought back the recollection of that moment when Harry had first set eyes on her.

She said casually that the weather was far more perfect than it had been the previous day, and went on to relate the tale of her visit to the country place of a friend. She had been coming in from thence when he had first seen her in the station checking her suit-case.

The subject of suit-cases was one on which he could discourse with fluency, and he told her the whole story of the lost bag, which he had omitted from his tale of the afternoon. But it all formed a sequence, and after the story was finished it was inevitable that they should both be thinking of their meeting outside the window of the picture-store.

Now, when a young man and a young woman make acquaintance in such unusual circumstances, and each has fallen in love with the other at first sight, it is impossible that their conversations shall be like those of people who do not know the joy of meeting one's fate on the sidewalk.

Ethel, being a woman, had read the secret in Harry's eyes that afternoon when he thanked her for her kindness; and Harry, sitting now opposite her and not very far away, could not interpret her shyness and blushes in any other than the way in which he most desired to interpret them.

But of course they were too well-bred for either to entertain the idea that they were mutually in love. It was rather that they felt these things than thought them.

And so, when Harry, in returning to her the two dollars she had loaned him that afternoon, took her hand for a moment, he restrained his desire to cover it with kisses, for Cupid whispered in his ear that he must wait a while. And she, although she drew her hand away at the same time that he released it, felt that she would not at all mind his holding it, if he wanted to. But their blushes were only those of embarrassment, after all.

In the course of the evening he was introduced to her tall brother, who came in for a moment. After he had gone, she told Harry that it was he whom the Chicago girl had befriended.

This reference to something she had said at their first meeting gave him the courage to ask her why she had been so kind to him, a stranger. At first she gave him the same reason that she had given in the afternoon—that she wanted to do for some one what a girl had done for her brother Jim—but, moved thereto by Dan Cupid, who refused to allow her to play her hand alone, she added: "I—I liked your eyes. They're just as nice as Jim's, and everybody says he has lovely eyes."

Harry covered her embarrassment at her own outspokenness by getting up to go, but he knew well that she had meant

to say, "Because I liked you." And that night each held a long and confidential talk with the pillows, which normally are intended only for resting the head upon, but which come in for a great deal of information that the world never knows anything about.

Some evenings later there was a dinner at Ethel's home, and Harry attended in the character of a new friend of the family. And some months later there was another dinner, at which it was announced that something had happened which put Miss Ethel Stone forever beyond the reach of designing young men.

The something had a great deal to do with a rising young financial expert in the employ of Hartridge & Lodge. But the congratulations were tendered to one Mr. Henry Horner, of London, England.

THE END.

THE LESSER EVIL.

By GARRET SMITH.

What happened when the scouts had to choose between the blizzard and the Indians.

"THE blizzard! Thank God!"

The speaker, one of five buckskin-clad frontiersmen, stood pointing up the valley to where a swiftly moving pall of blackness was blotting out sky and land.

Fifeful gusts of wind stirred the air, which all the morning had been ominously quiet. In a few minutes they would be shut in by a stinging, whirling, blinding, freezing mantle of snow, in which a man might be hopelessly lost a few feet from his own door and perish within touch of safety.

A strange subject for thankfulness, indeed! And of all the brands of blizzards the West has to offer, none quite equals the Sierra Nevada variety that yearly haunts the Pinche Valley, "Land of Deepest Snow."

These five sturdy frontiersmen had beheld its ravages winter after winter. Many a time in the late spring, when the hills were once more bare, they had seen men go forth as they had done, lured by the March sunshine into believing the

storms were over, only to be overtaken by one of those last blasts of the storm king. A few weeks later their bodies would be found in the melting drifts.

And yet, as the men looked up the valley at the advancing cloud pall, the other four echoed the first speaker's cry of thankfulness.

It was not pleasure that had lured them forth that morning, but a danger more to be feared than the blizzard.

Late the fall before the first rumors of Sioux uprisings had floated over the foothills to Sierra Pinche. Then came the snow, burying deep for weeks at a time both white man and his red foe. But with the thaw the rumors of danger were renewed.

The first mail-runner who came over the drifts on his snow-shoes after the February blizzard, told of skirting a temporary Sioux village where a tribe had wintered. A war-dance was in progress. There were signs of breaking camp and starting on the war-path as soon as there was footing for ponies.

So Sierra Pinche had prepared for an attack. When the trails were bare, scouting parties were sent out to learn the plans of the foe. It was on such an expedition that the five had started this morning.

And only a few miles from home they met with a surprise. The Indians, instead of still lying in camp fifty miles to the north, as Sierra Pinche had hoped, had started down the trail the week before and were now almost upon the unsuspecting town.

The scouts had reached the summit of Little Bald Top, a low foot-hill, over which the trail ran to cut off a long curve of the valley. Silhouetted against the sky-line, they stood in plain sight before they saw their peril.

There, winding down the trail like a great serpent, scarce two miles away, but seeming much nearer in the clear air, came the Sioux band. The braves led, on their war-ponies. In the rear followed the squaws and pack-ponies, laden with wigwams and camp equipments.

Sierra Pinche occupied the site of an ancient Sioux village, from which the redskins had been ousted ten years before at the first coming of the whites. In consequence, even when the hatchet lay buried, the village was an especial cause of Sioux heart-burning.

Evidently, they had planned to swoop down now, in the early spring, massacre the white man, burn his dwellings, and reestablish their old permanent habitation in the sheltered valley. The Sioux had been so confident of complete surprise that they had advanced openly without their usual caution.

White men and red saw each other at the same time. It was before the days of the long-range repeating rifle, however, so the former were for the moment safe from shots.

But the whites were afoot, and, even on the slushy trail and soft spring soil, could not hope to outstrip for long the Indians' mustangs.

"Hike for the Bronson cabin, boys," said Job Haskins, the leader. "We can stand 'em off a little while."

Down the hill at the right of the trail stood a little log shanty. It had been empty since old Bronson, the trapper, died the fall before.

As the white men started for this shelter, a war-whoop, faint in the distance, reached their ears, and the braves broke into a gallop.

The scouts stumbled down the slope toward the cabin through the snow and mud. At the door they stopped and looked back. The storm-cloud had mounted higher in the heavens.

On came the Indians. Faster came the storm. The foe was now only a mile away. Fascinated, the five at the cabin door watched the race. Would the red devils or the white fiend win?

A half mile further came the red. Scattering shots sang over the cabin. Then the sun darkened. The Indian horsemen paused as though paralyzed. A moment they scanned the heavens.

Then they turned and fled back to where the squaws were hastily unpacking their ponies and erecting shelters. After that the blackness shut them from view.

The storm king had won. While he held sway, the frontiersmen were safe from all else.

II.

BUT the feeling of relief was of brief duration. The three days that followed in the snow-bound cabin passed all too quickly. The prisoners knew they were only a respite.

A mile away lay the Indian band, huddled under the drifts in their wigwams. As soon as the storm passed, the redskins would dig out from their snow blanket, butcher the whites, and then sweep on to the massacre of the village.

To try an escape through the blizzard meant simply to prefer freezing to the Indians' bullets. To come to the surface after the air cleared would simply make of themselves easy targets. To stay in the cabin would end in their being shot like foxes in a trap.

They had just time to barricade the single door and window when the storm struck them. At first their shelter rocked like a ship at sea under the impact of the blast. Then, as the snow piled around it, the cabin ceased shaking.

In two hours total darkness told them the window was covered. The snow stopped drifting through the chinks. Finally the sound of the wind died away, the fire they had kindled on the hearth

smoked and went out for lack of draft, and they knew that they were completely buried.

Huddled in the black, foul air, the men debated over and over again futile plans of escape. When sleep overcame them they took turns on watch; not that it did any good, but because the instinct of the frontier forbade them to be caught asleep.

Every few hours one of them would pry open the door and burrow up to the outer air. Each time he found the storm still raging. This, too, helped to keep the air of the cabin breathable.

And, so their watches told them, three days passed.

At length Haskins clambered back from a trip to the outer world, and reported that the storm was subsiding. The wind had slackened, and he had caught fitful glimpses of the noonday sun.

"Boys," he said, "get your snow-shoes and climb out. It's our only chance. We'll make a dash for it, and try to get a start befort the redskins see us."

A moment later, Haskins ahead, they started for the surface. As he brushed back the last of the drifting snow above, the leader suddenly paused.

A shrill coyote call came faintly to the ears of the men below. Haskins lay back in the opening, only his head above the snow, till his eyes were accustomed to the dazzling light, then he dropped back so suddenly that he trod on the head of the man below him.

"That's a Sioux!" he exclaimed. "The red devil wa'n't ten rods away, burrowed to his chin in a drift, watching us. The whole tribe is out. It's all up, boys. Shake and say good-by. They saw the sun before we did, that's all. We'll nail a few of them before we cash in."

Silently the men gripped each other's hands in the darkness, then cocked their rifles and waited.

"Think of the women and children in the village," groaned Jennings, who had a family of his own; "and we no way to get word to them!"

"If we'd only been more leery on the start!" moaned Jepson for the thousandth time.

Then more moments dragged away in silence. Suddenly one of the men started up. It was Bryce, the youngest of the party.

"Boys, I've got it," he shouted excitedly. "I believe it will work. Do you remember last spring, when the snow over the river fell in in places? The river hadn't been frozen when the snow came and the water had made a tunnel of it. Well, it's that way now, or I'm a mountain-goat. Quick! Smash out that window an' burrow through for the river. We can follow it down to the village under the snow."

"You're crazy, boy," said Haskins. "Do you suppose there's a nice open tunnel all the way to the village? We'd simply freeze in that ice-water, if we didn't drown or get stuck fast in slush."

"It's worth trying," spoke up Jepson. "I'm for giving it a try. Anyhow, we can fool the Sioux. If we open the window keerful like, and when we are through it pack the snow agin it, they'll think the devil took us away."

"Perhaps you're right," reluctantly agreed the leader. "Anyhow, we ain't got nothin' to lose."

They carefully loosened the barricaded window, removing all traces that would catch the keen eye of the savage. Forcing back the yielding snow beyond, Haskins crept through.

One by one the others followed. The last man brushed off the sill, closed the window, and packed the snow back against it.

The snow was compact, but not yet solid and icy, as it would be in a few days, so on hands and knees they had little difficulty in forcing their way through. A rod from the cabin they struck the river-bank.

As Bryce had predicted, they found themselves knee-deep in icy water, with a low arch of snow above.

Now, the Pinche is only a river by courtesy. At the point where the men stood it was rather a swift mountain brook, running over a rock bottom all the way to the village. In times of freshet it can lay some claim to the term "river," but at this time, with the mountain springs and gullies snow-locked, it was in few places over three feet deep. Its subsidence since the blizzard began had left some distance between its surface and the tunnel roof.

At Haskins's command each man unwound one end of his muffler and passed

it back to the man behind. Making these ends fast, the men were so attached to each other that no one could fall or get lost in the darkness without having help at hand.

It soon looked, however, as though the forebodings of Haskins would be realized. They had crept scarcely a dozen yards over the slippery bottom, with heads bent low under the snow roof, when Haskins, who was leading, floundered and went down, dragging with him Jepson, the next in line. A sputter and gurgle told the other three that their companions were over their heads in a hole.

Heels braced as well as possible on the slippery bottom, and hands propped against the snow overhead, the men slowly drew their dripping, swearing leaders back within their depth. The two were chilled to the marrow. Indeed, the others, who were immersed only to their knees, were little better off.

Much time was lost trying to find a shallow passage, but it seemed that the hole extended from bank to bank. At length they were driven to burrowing once more.

Along the shore for, perhaps, two rods they tunneled before repeated trials showed shallow water again.

Here, too, the snow recently soaked offered formidable resistance to their snow-shoes, out of which they had improvised shovels.

But the work had partially warmed them, and again they advanced several rods. Suddenly, without warning, the roof over them dropped. They were buried in a wet, freezing paste.

Slowly they struggled out, nearly smothered in the process. The running water aided their efforts, and fortunately the cave-in did not extend far.

Thus they floundered and stumbled on. Sometimes able to walk almost erect, and in water only at their ankles; again they would stoop more and more under a gradually sloping roof, till it seemed they were to be shut off after all their efforts. Once they crawled for rods on hands and knees, with only their heads above water.

Youth and hardiness, born of years of exposure to all kinds of weather, were in their favor, but the chill was beginning to gain on them. On and on they crawled

and staggered, ever slower and more uncertainly.

Twice more they were caught in cave-ins, and each occasion was within little of being the end of their efforts. A dozen times one of them would stop and, falling to his knees,* declare he could go no farther. Then, helped forward by his companions to a shallow spot, he would be revived a little by their rough but merciful pounding that set his sluggish blood astir once more. Then they would go on till another fell.

How long this struggle continued none of them knew. It seemed for ages. Their minds at length became as numb as their bodies. All motion became mechanical.

Each realized dully that in only a few minutes at the longest, when they stopped at one of the resting-places, they would forget to pound each other or to go on again, but just topple drowsily over and fall asleep.

At the last stop it had been impossible to arouse Jennings to any further interest in life. He had sunk to his knees, and refused to move. So Jepson and Bryce boosted him along between them for a little way.

Then they found the water steadily deepening again. They stumbled on. To their waist it rose; then to their shoulders. Still they crept on, hoping they were nearly across the hole.

When the water touched their chins they stopped. Haskins, reaching forward, found the roof joined the water.

They were at last shut off!

Only Haskins realized the situation. To the dumb brains of the rest it meant only an end of struggle. Why, they neither knew nor cared.

Bryce and Jepson still held the nearly unconscious Jennings between them. Simpson stood by, dully acquiescent to his fate. Only Haskins, man of iron, still had a little command of himself.

"Stand where you are, boys, while I explore," he said.

Loosening his scarf-end from his companion, he felt to the left along the edge of the roof a dozen feet. He came to deeper water, and had to stop. Then he felt his way back toward where the right bank of the stream should be. The water grew shallower. Then, as he found himself immersed only to his knees he again

was checked by the river-bank and snow-wall. There was no escape!

He stopped at last, overcome with despair. Why return to his companions at all? he asked himself. Let them fall in merciful stupor. He would soon follow them.

Then, for the first time, he noticed vaguely that there was no current in the water around him. Then he remembered that he had found none as far as he had gone toward the other bank. The half-formed thought was slipping from his drowsy brain, when suddenly its meaning flashed over him.

"Boys," he yelled, "we're saved! We're in the mill-pond. We're at Sierra Pinche!"

New strength surged through his chilled veins. It was the work only of a minute to shove his companions over to the bank.

"Keep awake, boys!" cried Haskins. "If I've enough strength left we'll be by a fire in fifteen minutes."

Seizing his snow-shoes, that still hung from his shoulder, he went to work with one of them as a shovel. It was slow work at first, but soon the softer snow was reached.

Up he struggled, and at last, when he felt that final burst of strength leaving him, his arms burst through to the open air.

"Well, by all the devils!" he heard shouted over him, and he was seized in the arms of old Captain Bainbridge.

Around him he saw smoke rising from funnels in the snow, leading to the roofs of the houses of Sierra Pinche.

"The others are down there," Haskins whispered hoarsely, pointing at the hole from which he emerged. "The Sioux are coming," he added, then fainted dead away.

The wondering captain yelled for help, and a half dozen villagers, who had been shoveling snow near by, came running up on their snow-shoes. It took only a few minutes to dig out the other four and hurry them, now all in a stupor, to the fireside of the nearest cabin. There warmth and restoratives soon revived Bryce enough to tell brokenly of their adventure.

"Boys," shouted rough-and-ready Captain Bainbridge, "I'll pick out twenty of

you and go back a way through that tunnel and surprise those redskins in the rear. It's the only way we can win with such a big bunch as that. We are fresh and well fed, and, besides, we won't have to go as far as these fellows did."

III.

It was late the next fall that two Indians stood one day, just at sunset, on the summit of Little Bald Top. They were gazing intently at the valley beneath.

Five miles below, the smoke of Sierra Pinche curled peacefully skyward. Almost at their feet, on the banks of the river, stood Bronson's old cabin, still deserted.

"My son, 'tis the place of the Evil Spirit, the Great Manitou, who loves the paleface and hates the red man."

It was the elder of the two speaking, a battered chieftan. He spoke in the Sioux tongue. The younger, a gaily feathered and painted chief, looked stolidly ahead in seeming indifference.

"I bring you here, my son," the old man went on, "because since the great slaughter, seven moons ago, my spirit is broken. The war-path shall know me no more. You will command our shattered tribe, and I would have you walk in paths of wisdom. And so I bring you here, that you may see with your own eyes the land where no Sioux can ever go with safety. Had you not been away in the mountains with our other band you, too, would lie dead now in yonder valley, smitten by the white man's bullet. The Great Spirit saved me to teach you wisdom, my son.

"When the great snow was coming that day we saw what seemed five white men go into that cabin—five devils they were. When the storm passed they were gone. There was no track. No man could go alive through the storm. Yet they were gone.

"They were seen by our braves watching us from the roof of the log wigwam. We lay about them till night. We dug around about the wigwam. We would take them while they slept. We would shoot and burn them in their blankets. But even as we watched they had gone, as smoke rises to heaven.

"A great fear struck our bones, but the

medicine men cast spells about and told us to attack the village.

"We went, but many a brave's heart that had not before known fear was as water that night.

"We had gone but a little way when the devils rose again from the snow all about us. They came out of the drifts over the river as the prairie-dob burrows from the ground in springtime. They were many as the leaves of the forest, and their rifles were as the fire from heaven.

"They rose from the snow before, behind us, and in our midst. I, your father, who was shot and left for dead, alone of all our braves escaped. My son, learn wisdom. Never again come near the place of the devil."

The Sioux stood silent for a moment, and stared stolidly at the valley. Then, at a sign from the elder, they mounted their ponies and rode up the trail.

Henceforth the paleface dwelt undisturbed in Sierra Pinche.

THE FROZEN FORTUNE.

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.

The thousands that must be had and the millions that were found,
only to keep melting away before the finder's frantic eyes.

CHAPTER I.

THE PAPER AND THE GIRL.

THE luck turned, though I did not know it, when I met the red-haired man on the road to Vermilion.

The color might have warned me of vivid happenings, and it brought them. It brought more red metal than I have ever been able to use, and it left such memories that I have hated my own red hair ever since, and I have wondered and almost believed—but not quite—that it would have been better if I had never met the Irishman on the Vermilion stage road, and never become involved in the fierce and bloodstained mesh of treachery and greed that followed.

Just how I came to be on the road to Vermilion leads to a chain of circumstances that I do not care to recall too clearly. There was nothing particularly disgraceful in the way I had spent the last ten years, but there was a fair amount of folly in it, and some bad luck.

I drifted into irregular journalism as naturally as a retired pugilist takes to saloon-keeping, and I happened to come into Goldendale, California, with a little money. Here I did a sensible thing.

I bought a half interest in the local weekly, the *Bonanza*, determined for once to get something tangible for my money.

The *Bonanza* was managed and

owned, before my arrival, by its editor, Philip Gordon—"Pill" Gordon, the best friend I shall ever know. But the paper had seen better days, when the golden tides of the 'fifties ran full flood through Smith County. Then copies sold for a dollar apiece at the mines, and the paper was fiery with the violent metaphor and picturesque abuse supposed to be the proper thing for Western journalism at that period.

Men had come into the office with six-shooters in quest of satisfaction, or, preferably, blood. More than one editor had kept his private burying-ground, and more than one had died with his boots on and an emptied pistol in his hand.

But the exhaustion of the mines had done what the bullets of the bad men had failed to accomplish. Goldendale had declined, and the *Bonanza* had sunk to a mild, inoffensive country weekly, relying largely upon "boiler-plate" matter to fill its columns.

But Pill Gordon believed in the paper and in the town with the fanatical local pride of the Westerner. His hope was to see Goldendale a metropolis, the *Bonanza* a daily, and himself, I believe, State Senator.

As the first two, at least, of these ambitions were shared by most of his fellow citizens, he never came to realize their pathetic absurdity. Every one was

equally insane except, perhaps, myself and his sister Jessie.

Miss Jessie was several years younger than Pill. They lived alone together, and she took care of him in a maternal fashion. I spent a good deal of my abundant spare time at the house, but it was more than propinquity that made me fall in love.

She was a girl of California in every inch; tall like her brother, her skin like the pale gold of the wheat, and with big, luminous brown eyes. In the orchard behind the house she had a dozen hives of Italian bees which were her greatest delight, and I helped her to manipulate them, in spite of stings, whenever I could find an excuse.

I made an excuse pretty often, and this morning had just finished helping her introduce several new queens.

"Pill seems worried, don't you think?" I remarked as we stood looking at the buzzing hives.

She glanced quickly up at me with a sudden trouble in her eyes.

"I know it. Do you know what is the matter?"

I did not. But Pill's abstraction had been growing more obvious for several weeks.

We had been spending more money than I considered wise; Pill had an idea that a better paper would increase our circulation. On the almost certainty of a large job-printing contract we had raised a loan of six thousand dollars on a note, and had purchased a new press, which had been ever since costing heavily for repairs. And, after all, we had failed to get the contract.

The *Bonanza's* plant was mortgaged to the last dollar, like Pill's house, and how he had persuaded the bank to let us have more money on our note was a mystery which only he, who had engineered the deal, could explain.

Something about the affair was troubling him, I knew; but I had not been able to learn what it was.

"It seems to me that we're trying to expand too much," I went on. "There's only a limited amount of newspaper business possible here."

"But we're going to increase it," Jessie replied. "We're going to make Goldendale what it was in 'fifty-five."

I glanced at her ironically.

"Yes, Pill's committed to that program, and I'm with him in whatever he does," she declared.

"All right. I'm in it, heart and soul," I said cheerfully.

"But your interests and your life are not in Goldendale, like ours."

"The greatest interests I have in the world are here," I exclaimed, catching at the opportunity. "And the greatest hopes."

"You mean that the paper—"

"No. I don't mean the paper. I mean—I mean, you are the only thing I care for on earth. All my interests are in you, and all my hopes and all my life. I know that I've got nothing to offer you now, but—"

"Don't," she interrupted gently. "You're talking foolishly."

I stopped short, taken aback.

"But it's the fact," I recovered myself to say. "I've got nothing to offer you, but I love you, and I want you to tell me, Jessie, if I have any chance—if you care for me at all."

"If I did, do you think it would matter what you had to offer me, as you call it?" she answered, turning half away, and my heart sank. "Don't you know me yet?" she added, turning back again, and I caught a look in her eyes that thrilled me.

"Do you care for me at all, then?"

"Don't you know?" she said, turning quickly away once more, but she did not resist when I drew her back, and what we said next was no one's business.

"But Phil!" she exclaimed at last. "I can't desert him."

"There's no need. Pill can live with us."

She shook her head.

"Phil's having a hard fight now, and he needs all the love and care I can give him. He needs me more than you do. You know I couldn't abandon him—now."

I argued this new obstacle with her vainly, almost jealous of Pill.

"Well, but when Pill doesn't need you, when the paper is booming, and he has made his pile?" I demanded.

"I suppose it would be different—for I will always love you," she murmured.

"Then, by thunder, the paper is going

to boom. Watch me boom it!" I exclaimed.

I went down to the office with a new spirit for any enterprise.

I had a dozen schemes for expanding our fortunes. I would make the *Bonanza* the best paper in California. I would make Goldendale a great city, and Pill a legislator. I would have undertaken to make him President.

CHAPTER II.

RUIN AHEAD.

I BURST into the office and slung my hat on the table. Pill was there, moodily chewing the stem of an unlighted pipe, and his face somehow took the exuberance out of me.

Our office was in the center of a block of brick stores on the Square, and Pill and I used a rather small room on the ground floor, separated from the street by only a great plate-glass window. From the sidewalk we could thus be observed any day at our labors on opposite sides of a long table, presumably molding the destinies of Goldendale.

Pill considered this publicity of work as a great advertisement for the paper, and perhaps it was. I know I always felt like a window display.

"Dick, have you any prospects anywhere outside of Goldendale?" inquired Pill, turning a haggard eye upon me as I rushed in.

"Not that I know of. Why?" I asked, cooling down quickly.

"Because if you have, I'd advise you to clear out of here at once. We're up against it."

"Nonsense. We're always in trouble, and we always pull through. I've just been fixing a scheme to make a million. Things aren't as bad as that, are they?"

"As bad as what?" Pill snapped irritably. "All I know is that if we can't raise six or seven thousand before July we'll break—bust—go under and never come up again."

I was appalled at the amount. I had fancied that it might be a question of a quarter of that sum, though I had lately been rather afraid to cast up all our liabilities.

We had never made seven thousand

dollars in our best years, and how we were to do it in three months was a problem. Nor could I conceive how we had become involved so deeply.

"But how do we come to be so much in the hole?" I exclaimed.

Pill muttered something about heavy expenses and bills.

"Well, suppose we do bust. Nobody minds a little thing like that on the Coast, and we can make a fresh start," I suggested.

"It isn't only that. My God, if it was no more than that!" Pill burst out, fixing me with a desperate eye. "But it's disgrace, Dick. It's the law. It's San Quentin Penitentiary."

"Here, sit down and let's have the whole story," I said, feeling a cold sickness of horror. "This is no time to lose your nerve. Do you mean anything in particular, or are you drunk?"

"I wanted to tell you, but I was afraid to," replied Pill miserably. "But it's bound to come out, unless we can do miracles. I raised six thousand dollars three months ago, you know, for our new press and things."

"I wondered that the bank would let us have it," I remarked.

"They wouldn't—not without another name on the note. Well, I got one. It was Hollis"—naming a wealthy rancher near Goldendale. "Well, Hollis—I used his name without authority."

"You don't mean you forged it!" I ejaculated.

"Just so," said Pill stonily.

I stared at him, hardly believing.

"And what's become of the note?" I managed to ask.

"The bank has it, of course. Hollis doesn't know anything about it, but on the third of July, three months from now, it will be presented, dishonored, and the whole thing will come out."

"Oh, you fool! Oh, you incalculable idiot!" I groaned.

"We made sure of getting that contract," said poor Pill. "We had to have the new press. We could have bought the note back by this time, and no one the wiser. The contract would have made it all straight—and they threw us down. Then, with repairs to the presses and everything, the money went—I hardly know where."

I thought hard for a few minutes.

"Brace up, old man!" I cried, hitting him over the back. "We've got to get out of this mess by hook or crook, if we have to mortgage the rest of our lives. I'll stand by you, and we'll buy that note off before it falls due."

"Well, what plan can you think of?" said Pill, rousing a little.

"Dashed if I know!" I admitted, and we sat for a long time in silence, trying to think, and looking mechanically through the window out on the Square.

"Nothing but luck can do it. Play the stock market," I suggested.

"I'd sooner play the races. Do you want us to lose another six thousand dollars—that we haven't got?"

"Does Jessie know?" I cried, struck with a new possibility of horror.

"Do you think I could tell her a thing like that?" Pill answered, and there was another long silence.

"You see, there's no use. The thing's bound to happen," said Pill at last. "Well, let's get out the paper while we can," and he turned to his work with unexpected stoicism.

CHAPTER III.

THE RED-HAIRED MAN.

I TRIED to assume an appearance of industry also, but I am afraid the paper would have been got out late if it had depended on my labors. Pill scarcely spoke again.

We were a silent pair of partners that afternoon, and when I got back to my hotel I prepared to spend the evening in thrashing the matter out.

It was for Jessie's sake—that was the idea uppermost in my mind. If the *Bonanza* went down, if Pill came to grief, if he went to prison—I had to face the ugly possibility—I knew very well that Jessie would be lost to me forever.

Not that I would have cared if all her relatives were convicts, but I knew her well enough to know that her shame and agony would be such that she would not let even me see her again.

But the more I thought the less I could see any safe or easy way out of the

difficulty. I went over and over in my mind the various methods in which seven thousand dollars might be made in three months without capital.

There were not many of them, and they were all highly hazardous. But the mines seemed the only one that offered any real chance.

Even that was a slim one. But I had once hunted for gold in Oregon. I had called myself a prospector, and I had once located a claim which I sold for eight hundred dollars.

This success had made a great impression on me, and I had preserved an idea that I could repeat it whenever necessary. This is the invariable delusion of the gold-seeker, and it departs only with life.

I went to bed at three o'clock in the morning, and when I saw Pill, five hours later, I asked: "How much money have we in cash?"

"Three or four hundred dollars," he answered.

I noticed that he looked as if he had slept rather less than I had.

"Could you let me have half of it? Could you run the paper on credit for a while?"

"I might. But what are you going to do?"

"Klondike," I replied succinctly.

His face brightened.

"You're the right sort!" he exclaimed. "We'll fight it to the last ditch. But two hundred dollars wouldn't be any use to you in the Alaska diggings. It wouldn't last any time. It wouldn't even outfit you."

"Well, but since I can't have any more—"

Pill reflected for a few minutes.

"I think we can let you take three hundred," he said. "But don't go to Alaska. I can put you onto something better—cheaper, anyway. There have been big strikes made in the Snake River country lately, in northern Idaho. I've got it straight, from a fellow who's just back. There isn't a rush yet, but there will be one.

"Go up there and get in on the ground floor. It's a quartz-mining country, and you'll have to depend on locating some good claims and selling them quick. But it's a wild-geese chase," Pill

added; "and it's a thousand to one against your finding anything inside the time limit."

"I'll count on a fool's luck, anyway," I said cheerfully. "And I'll start tonight."

"Yes; no use waiting. There's no time to lose. But look here, if you don't find anything, don't come back. Bury yourself somewhere in the hills for a while, till it's all over."

"I think I see myself doing that," said I. "Get the cash for me, and I'll pack my grip. You'll see me back before July."

But the farewell to Jessie was what I dreaded. I had to tell her what I was going to do without telling why I was going to do it, but I managed it after a fashion.

"We must break or make by the end of June," I said, to wind up a blundering explanation. "I'll be back before then. The paper's in worse trouble than you fancied. Be good to Pill, and don't ask him questions. I'm going to do all I can. Remember that I love you, and wish me good luck."

She put her arms round my neck.

"All my love goes with you. May it bring you good luck!" she whispered in my ear.

Three days later I was in Vermilion, Idaho, near the Oregon border.

Vermilion was a town of considerable importance at that time, being the residence of many wealthy mine owners. The mines themselves were mostly from eight to twenty miles back in the mountains, connected with the town by a spur line of railway, and I learned before I had been long in town that they were just then in a state of great uproar by reason of a general strike.

There had been the usual amount of stupidity on one side, and obstinacy on the other, and it had come to a great deal of mild rioting and smashing, and one dynamite explosion.

The trouble seemed to center round the Blackfoot, the largest and richest mine in the district, owned by Luis Ranon, and there was bitter talk of this gentleman's Spanish disposition to treat his men like dogs. The fact that Ranon did not operate his mine himself, but had leased it to a Sacramento company, did

not seem to make any difference to these critics.

I did not take any great amount of interest in the disturbance, though it was the only talk at Vermilion. I was too impatient to be about my own business, and I purchased a burro, a hundred pounds of provisions, tools and prospector's apparatus, and started into the hills without delay.

The story of my operations for the next three weeks is too monotonous and depressing to tell. I camped, moved, dug, pulverized rock and washed out hand-fuls of debris, and sometimes I found "colors," and sometimes not, but never in any encouraging quantity.

The successful prospector must unite infinite patience with infinite hope, and I was totally lacking in the former quality. Even my stock of the latter began to run low.

The fierce determination born of necessity took its place, however, and kept me at work for three weeks, and then my supplies ran out.

It would be necessary to go back to Vermilion to buy more, and this would take almost my last dollar. My next expedition, then, was my last stake. It would have to win, for Pill could spare me no more money.

I might have got a job in the mines myself, and worked long enough to accumulate a fresh stake if I had had unlimited time, but it was precisely time that was most precious to us.

So I hid my outfit in the hills and set out for Vermilion, riding my jackass. I struck the stage road about ten miles from town, and was plodding along slowly when I perceived a line of dust rising along the road ahead.

As it neared me it revealed a big man, pushing a very tired horse into a lope.

I noticed that he looked hard at me as he approached, and when he had come nearer he suddenly pulled up, with our animals' heads almost touching. He was dressed like myself, in rough miner's costume, but his broad hat-brim was looped up with some metal insignia, and his coat was thrown across his saddle-bow.

His hair was rather long, like my own, and was of the same unlovely shade of red; his heavy mustache matched mine,

too, and we were of much the same large build, but there ended the resemblance, such as it was.

CHAPTER IV.

FALSE COLORS.

THE red-haired man gazed fixedly at me and I at him. Finally he moved up nearer, pushing back his hat, and the action gave me a glimpse of a pair of hard, bloodshot, greenish-gray eyes, like a wolf's.

"Good afternoon to you, stranger," he said in a curiously thin voice, with a hint of a brogue in it, a voice that did not match his bulk.

I replied civilly to the salutation, and was about to ride on.

"Wait a bit," said the horseman. "I reckon we're the only two red-headed men on the trail to-day. No offense, stranger. Saints! we're as like as two pays!"

"Not quite," I said; "it's only the hair."

"Well, but—" He continued to scan me curiously up and down till I began to be annoyed. "Prospecting? Been in the hills long?"

"First time out for three weeks," I told him.

"You're going into Vermilion, maybe?"

I said that I was.

"I ought to go there too. I passed my word to be in town this afternoon, but I can't, nohow. Got to ride down to Osage."

He inspected me again with interest.

"Say, would you have time to make ten dollars? It's just a package of papers I want you to deliver at the office of the Blackfoot Mine."

I was going to say that I would deliver it for nothing, when I recollected that ten dollars would buy a good deal of pork and flour, and I nodded.

"Then, here's five dollars down," said the stranger; "and here's a receipt for the other five."

He scribbled on a bit of paper with a pencil.

"They'll give you the money at the office if you show them this. And here's what I want you to give them," he went

on, taking a large sealed envelope from his pocket. "It's just papers—no good to anybody but me and the Blackfoot people."

I pocketed the package, the note, and the five-dollar bill.

"And, look you," he continued. "They don't hardly know me by sight even at the office, and they'll probably think you're me. That's what I want them to think, I'm telling you straight. You see, I promised to bring this package in myself, and if they think I've done it, why, that's where you're worth your ten dollars."

I was not much pleased at this explanation, but it was no very serious matter after all, and I agreed.

"And yet another thing," said the red-headed man. "We're about of a size, and you must change hats with me."

He leaned over and deftly lifted off my hat, and replaced it with his own, before I could stop him.

"That's all. Good-by, and good luck!" he shouted, and was off in a cloud of dust.

I had to look after him vainly, for there was no use in setting my burro in pursuit, and I was filled with suspicion and dislike.

Why should he wish me to personate him? It smelled of fraud.

The paper he had given me was simply a receipt for five dollars, signed "J. C. Dolan." But I reflected that I could easily prove my identity if necessary, and as I needed the ten dollars I concluded not to look too closely into the matter, but to perform my duties as messenger and ask no questions.

So I rode on, reaching Vermilion late in the afternoon. As I ascended the steep grade of the main street I noticed that the town seemed unusually full of men, and that there was some excitement in the air.

This I attributed to the shutting down of the mines, and paid no attention, though I seemed to be the object of a good deal of curiosity myself. But I set this down to my fearfully dusty appearance, and rode straight to the office of the Blackfoot Mine.

It was a handsome building, much resembling a bank, and I hitched my burro and went in.

At the cashier's wicket I shoved in the sealed packet.

"I want to leave this here," I said.

"All right. What is it?" said the cashier, looking surprised.

"And I want to get five dollars," I added, giving him the receipt.

He glanced at the paper, looked quickly back at me, and his expression changed.

"Why, certainly, Mr. Dolan," he said effusively, shoving out the money. "Things quiet to-day?"

I made no reply, and turned to go, glad that I had got through with it.

"Won't you wait a minute?" said the cashier. "I know Mr. Crawford will want to see you." He ran back through the office, crying, "Mr. Crawford! Here's Mr. Dolan."

I had no desire whatever to see Mr. Crawford, but I heard a sudden exclamation, a noise of a chair being pushed back, and a man came quickly into the corridor from a door marked "Private."

He was an elderly, anxious-looking gentleman, and I expected to be instantly exposed. But he looked at me in a doubtful way, and said interrogatively, "Mr. Dolan?"

I muttered some sort of assent.

"You must excuse me if I didn't know you. You know you've never been around this office," he cried, with a show of cordiality that rang false. "Believe I never had the pleasure of meeting you. Man, you've got nerve! The town's like a wasp's nest. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know exactly," I stammered. But I wanted to get away at once.

"I'd advise you to be careful," he went on, looking uneasily out of the window. "Are you going to be in town all day? We may want to communicate with you. Where can we find you for the next hour or two?"

"I'll go and sit in the Palace saloon, a couple of blocks down the street. You can find me there," I said, and hurried away.

My entrance into the saloon produced an effect which astonished and alarmed me. Men glanced sidewise at me, whispered, and glanced again, and there seemed to be hostility in their faces.

Yet no one spoke to me or offered any provocation, as I seated myself at a little table in the remotest corner.

I was ashamed to leave the place at once, and I sat there for perhaps fifteen minutes, wondering who this man Dolan might be, and what profit or peril I was going to gain by personating him.

I did not intend to personate him much longer, that was certain, and I was about to go out, when a bareheaded young man hurried into the saloon.

I thought I had seen him at the office. He glanced searchingly round, then came over to me, dropped a note on the table, and hurried out again without uttering a word.

I tore the note open. It read:

Town getting too hot for you. Better get out and lie low. Shall I send you any money?
CRAWFORD.

I did not want any more money from that quarter. I was growing thoroughly frightened.

I got up and started back to the Black-foot office, determined to give back the five dollars and clear up the misunderstanding.

As I crossed the street some one hooted. I looked back, and a stone flew past me. A crowd was collecting, staring after me, and I could almost see an excited whisper run through it.

The note was right. The town was getting hot—over something.

CHAPTER V.

JUDGE LYNCH'S JURY.

I STRODE into the mine office resolutely, and met Crawford in the corridor. He threw up his hands in affright when he saw me.

"Good Heavens! what are you here for?" he cried. "Didn't you get my note? What's the matter? Want any money? Here, give me a hundred dollars!" he snapped to the cashier, and he jammed the package of bills into my hand without looking at them. "What are you waiting for? Man, the town's on fire!"

"I'm not Dolan!" I blurted out.

"Then, who are you? No, that won't work. You've got the badge on your hat

now. You've been spotted. My God! here come the lynchers!"

In fact, I, too, heard from the street the hoarse roar and clamor of an excited mob, coming nearer, and the tramp and shuffle of hundreds of feet.

"They'll wreck the offices!" exclaimed Crawford, white to the lips. "You can't stay here!"

He seized me by the shoulders, and fairly ran me out the door before I could resist, and down the steps to the street.

"Out you go. Look out for yourself!" he snarled, and I thought I heard an oath as the door slammed and locked behind me.

A mighty howl, a blast of yells and curses struck me in the face as I reached the sidewalk. A dozen stones flew past, and I heard the splintering crash of the office windows back of me.

A mob of several hundred men was pouring down the street. They looked like miners; they carried clubs, drills, picks, guns, and a man in front swung a long rope.

It was for me, that rope! The yells with which they greeted me left no doubt of its purpose. I turned and ran for my life.

There is something utterly paralyzing in the inhuman fury of a crowd. I had met a good many dangers before, but nothing had ever given me the sick terror that now saturated my whole body. My legs felt numbed as I ran.

I heard a couple of shots, and then cries of "Don't shoot him! Hang the butcher!"

I swerved off at the first cross street, hoping to dodge into some alley or back yard, but no such refuge presented itself. I did not know the geography of the town, and I had no idea which way to turn.

The scattered van of the mob was gaining on me, with the most diabolical uproar, as I came suddenly upon a wide, level road, shaded with fine trees and built up with handsome dwellings. Surely some of these mansions would protect me, and I fled toward them.

I had scarcely turned the corner when a stone hit me hard between the shoulders, almost sending me on my face. I staggered, and before I could recover

myself the lynchers were upon me like a swarm of maddened bees.

Something struck me on the head, and I saw red lights. A big miner, his face sweating and distorted, swung an iron crowbar at me, and I wrenched it out of his hands, and beat them back for an instant.

When a man is fairly at bay it is astonishing how he can fight for his life, and I held them back in front, but they swarmed at me from behind.

Only my unusual physical strength enabled me to keep my feet so long. The blood was running into my eyes from a cut on the forehead.

I was almost at the end of breath and strength, when I saw, over the heads of my murderers, a handsome carriage moving slowly through the outskirts of the press. It must have become suddenly entangled in the mob, and was unable to get out.

It was only a few yards away, and in it sat the most beautiful woman I ever saw. Even in that desperate moment I felt a shock of admiration.

She was scarcely more than a girl, but full-blown with a Spanish luxuriance. I saw it all at a glance—her skin creamy as a magnolia bud, her eyes great and black, and great masses of black hair piled under her white hat.

She was all in white, and she looked down with the most superb indifference at the jam of howling miners surrounding the carriage.

The coachman was pale and frightened, leaning forward and trying to soothe the uneasy horses, but she sat still, with a sort of regal unconsciousness of the brutal mêlée that surged round her carriage wheels.

I saw all this at a glance, in a flash, as I battled. And in a flash I thought that if I could reach that carriage she would not refuse me help. She would whip up the horses, break through the mob, and get clear.

I redoubled my efforts, and fought like a maniac to gain the center of the street. The carriage rolled slowly up; it was passing me, but six feet away. I could not reach it.

I cast an imploring glance at the woman. She met it full, and looked straight into my desperate eyes with a

gaze of the most icy unconcern, except that a faint smile curved her red lips.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SEÑORITA.

SUCH inhuman, incredible indifference to my agony made me boil with a despairing rage that I had not felt before, and I screamed a curse straight into her face. She must have heard me above all the uproar.

For she turned, her face took on a startled change, and then, snatching the whip from the frightened driver, she lashed the horses. They plunged, clearing a space around them, and the carriage swerved and reeled toward me.

I reached it, and the girl seized me by the coat, with a man's grip, and almost dragged me in.

The mob bellowed and surged back upon the carriage in a mass. The girl lashed the horses again till they reared, but half a dozen men had them by the bridles.

Somebody shot one of the horses. The other stumbled, partly dragged down, and the carriage capsized. We were shot out into the crowd.

I hit out wildly at the red, infuriated faces that swarmed upon me, but it would have been of no use if I had had the strength of Goliath. Blows fell from every side; men were climbing over the carriage behind me, when, unexpectedly, it seemed to me that the press began to thin out.

I saw faces turned away from me, and suddenly a horse's head was poked almost into my eyes, and upon his back sat a man hitting out with a loaded whip-butt. There were a score of others with him, forcing back the mob.

I realized vaguely that it must be the police. The noise seemed to die away peacefully, and everything dissolved into a cloud.

Through the soft dulness of semistupor I had a dim sensation of the vibration of a carriage again, then I was carried somewhere and I dozed till I struggled back to life with the fiery flavor of brandy filling my mouth.

I was in a great, dimly lighted room; I was lying on a couch, and an old wom-

an was feeding the spirit into my lips with a spoon.

"Yet a little more," she crooned, with a villainous Mexican accent, as I opened my eyes and tried to raise myself.

I took a little more and felt life and recollection rushing back upon me again.

"Where am I?" was my first and most natural question.

"In the house of Don Luis Ranon, *señor*."

The name was familiar to me.

"The owner of the Blackfoot Mine?" I cried.

"*Sí, señor*, surely."

"There was a young lady, wasn't there? Who was she?"

"*Caramba!* Certainly his daughter, the *Señorita Ines Maria Immaculata*."

This was a bit of news on which I had time to reflect while the old Mexican washed and sponged my cuts and bruises with great skill, and applied sticking-plaster to my face and hands.

I was badly bruised; there were some very sore spots on my ribs and back, but no bones seemed to be broken. In fact, under the stimulus of the brandy I felt almost well, but I knew that I would be stiff and sore enough to-morrow.

"The *Señorita Ines Maria Immaculata*!" the old woman suddenly exclaimed, and she gathered up the implements of her ministrations and scuttled away.

The *señorita* came in. She had changed her dress and was all in black now, and her gorgeous beauty glowed like a live coal.

"I don't know how to thank you, *señorita*—" I began, stammering, for her magnificence almost tied my tongue.

"Call me Miss Ranon," she interrupted. "I'm an American girl. I was born in this State. My father is a Spaniard, though—oh, a Spaniard indeed! A grandee of old Castile, and the owner of the Blackfoot Mine, as I dare say you know. I dare say, too, you know as much about the mine as he does."

"He doesn't operate it; he leases it to a—a sort of company. He doesn't know the first thing about mining. He collects rare books, especially old Bibles, and he would have welcomed you only that he's in San Francisco, hunting for Bibles."

She ran on thus, evidently to spare my weakness and to put me at my ease, but I was impatient to get at the clue to all these happenings.

"You are very kind," I said, "and you have more nerve than any woman I ever saw. Now, can you tell me who this man Dolan is, and why they tried to lynch me to-day? By the way," I added hastily, "I should have told you that my name is Richard Shields, of Golden-dale, California, and I've been prospecting in the mountains back of here."

"The answer to your second question, Mr. Shields, is easy. The miners tried to lynch you because they mistook you for Dolan, though there's no great resemblance. It's true, though, that I mistook you for him, too, at first, when you were so covered with dust and blood. It was your voice that undeceived me. Dolan has a voice like a cat."

"But this Dolan, who is he? What has he done?" I insisted.

"Haven't you heard of it? They're calling it the 'Blackfoot Massacre' already. Dolan used to be a low lawyer in Sacramento, and a sort of cheap political boss. Then, I don't wish to tell you how, he secured the management of the legal affairs of our mine. He has done it well, I'll admit.

"But now our men are on strike. It would have blown over, but what does Dolan do but bring a gang of ruffians from Sacramento, whom he called his deputies. When the strikers began to smash a few windows he opened fire with repeating rifles, and when they broke and ran there were ten bodies on the ground. There were two or three women and children among them."

"The butcher!" I ejaculated hotly.

"That's what they're calling him. Of course, the women and children had no business to be there, but it stirred up the mines like a hornets' nest. They mobbed Dolan's gang, and if they could have caught Dolan himself they'd have burned him at the stake, I suppose. The mines will probably be shut down for six months, and all through his foolishness."

I recounted to her my own meeting with Dolan on the Vermilion road, and the suicidal errand I had undertaken.

"That was like Clarence Dolan," she commented. "He counted on your

paying the piper for him, thinking that he'd be at the Coast, I suppose, before the mistake was discovered. He's a wily red fox."

"You seem to know him well," said I.

The girl smiled singularly.

"Oh, yes. I know him well," she replied, and I do not know what there was in her tone and her smile that made me glance at her left hand.

But it was there, the ring I somehow expected on the fourth finger.

"You're right," she said, catching my look. "You are very quick, too. I am engaged to Mr. Dolan. It's no secret, for he has spread the news everywhere—to make it surer, I suppose."

At the first moment I had a pang of jealousy of the red-haired Irishman; then the slow horror grew upon me of the fact that it was while she believed me to be Dolan that she had been apparently pleased to see me murdered. The Irishman was not so much to be envied, after all.

I gazed at her incredulously, afraid to speak what was on my mind.

"I know what you're thinking!" she exclaimed. "But you don't know, and no one knows but me, just how things stand."

"But you're going to marry him?" I questioned.

"Never in the world!" Her eyes suddenly blazed. "Engaged to him—yes. I keep him at arm's length, and gain time. To-day I thought I was rid of him for good."

"Then why not break the engagement clear off?" I ventured to ask, tempted by her frankness.

"That would be too long a story. The man has a certain power—he is not stupid. I can't free myself of him at present, but I won't marry him."

"You don't love him?" I questioned curiously.

"It isn't that," she said impatiently. "Of course I don't love him, but it isn't that. I aim at better things. I'm the sort of woman to be a force, and I'm going to be one. I know very well that I'm one of the handsomest women in the State of California, and when I get my rights I'll be one of the richest. Then I'll be one of the most powerful. I don't collect Bibles. I'm going to do some-

thing else with my life. If I were only a man—but I'm going to make a good thing of it as it is."

"I believe you," I said with entire conviction, but weakly, for my head swam.

I had had too many violent emotions and adventures for one afternoon. I tried to speak, mumbled, sank into the cushions, and again unconsciousness flowed over me like a cloud.

CHAPTER VII.

TEMPTATION.

WHEN I came to myself I was still upon the couch, and could not at first recollect how I had got there.

The room was dim, and I was aware of a strange, violent murmur like a distant sea. I turned my head and saw the *señorita* reading by a shaded electric-light, and then comprehension returned.

I sat up. The windows were heavily blinded, and on the floor I noticed splinters of broken glass. Night had evidently come on, so I must have been in a stupor for some time.

"Do you feel better? You've been sleeping for hours," said Miss Ranon coming toward me.

Something thumped heavily against the wooden window-shutter, and there was a jingle of glass.

"What's that?" I cried.

"It's another mob," the girl explained with much poise of manner. "They think that Dolan is in the house."

"Then I'll get out at once," said I. "You can show them that nobody is here. I won't have the house wrecked on my account."

"Oh, the police will be able to keep them back, I think," she said. "Anyhow, you'll stay here as long as you like."

I got up with pain. I was very sore and stiff, but I felt greatly refreshed by my dead slumber, and I went to the window to look out.

"You mustn't open the window!" cried Miss Ines. "Not with the lights burning. You'd be shot instantly. We've darkened all the windows, but there have been plenty of stones thrown, and a few bullets, after all. Wait, I'll turn off the light, if you want to look out."

There was a click, and the room was dark. I drew the heavy curtains aside and peeped through the splintered shutters.

Under the glaring arc lights on the street surged a crowd of several hundred men, shouting, hooting, and flourishing weapons. The clamor of their wrath was the distant murmur I had heard, but they seemed now to be paying far less attention to the house than to a dark, motionless line of police drawn up on the sidewalk.

So far, the mob had not wrought itself up to the point of making a rush. Whether the police could beat it back when it did charge was another matter, and a dubious one.

"Good Heavens, how they must hate that man!" I exclaimed, drawing back with a shudder. "They'll have his blood!"

And then it came upon me that it was my blood they wanted.

"There's no use in talking about it," I said. "I've got to get away from here at once. They'll wreck the house if they don't get me, and they'll hang me if they do."

"Do as you like," said the *señorita*, shrugging her pretty shoulders. "If I were a man I wouldn't let them bluff me so. Look here, have you any idea which way Dolan has gone?"

I said that I had not.

"I've told you a good deal—I hardly know why," she went on. "Unless it was our unconventional sort of introduction. Somehow, I had a feeling that you could help me."

"I hope I can," I said. "I owe you my life."

"It would be worth a good deal more to me than you can understand if Dolan never came back. I'd give anything to know that he was dead. When I say anything, I mean, let's say twenty thousand dollars."

For a moment I failed to take her meaning. When I grasped the hideous proposition she had made I glared at her, and she looked back unabashed for a second.

"Oh, you don't understand!" she exclaimed passionately. "I made a mistake. I didn't mean to offer you blood-money; you're not that sort of man. But

Dolan is a reptile. The earth is wearied of him. He has it in his power to—well, to make me a beggar if he likes, and if I were a man, just for one day, I would end it.”

The woman’s fascination was such that I had already forgotten the murderous proposal of a moment ago, and I looked at her and was full of eager pity.

She came close to me and raised her face to mine.

“I’d kill him myself,” she breathed. “I tried to, once. He knows it, and it gives him a stronger hold over me. I am afraid of him, too; that is the sickening part of it. I hate and fear and abhor and despise him so that I could die. What can I do?”

She looked up into my eyes, her lovely face on fire.

“What can I do?” she repeated. “If ever a girl needed a friend, it’s now. I think I could love you if you freed me from that wretch.”

I caught the odor of her hair, and gazed into her wonderful face till my head swam. My disgust, my anger was gone, and I am afraid to think what I might have said or done in another moment, but a thin, shrill voice spoke from the doorway.

“Do I interrupt you, me dears?” it said.

The *señorita* wheeled like a panther. In the entrance, dusty, disheveled, but still wearing my hat and smiling coolly, stood the red-haired man I had met on the road to Vermilion.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHANGE OF PLAN.

“WHAT did you come back for?” blazed the girl after a gasp.

“To get some money,” replied Dolan.

“You lie!” I found my voice to say. “You came back because you thought that I’d been lynched by this time instead of you, and the coast would be clear for you, you murderer. If I had a gun—”

“Hello!” he interrupted. “I didn’t know you at first, with your face so charmingly decorated with sticking-plaster. But it’s my twin brother. Did you get your money all right?”

His assurance was so extreme that I could only glare.

“Wouldn’t you have done the same in my place?” he went on. “I was in a tight fix, and you haven’t lost by it. You seem to have fallen on your feet.”

He looked at Miss Ines and spoke lightly, but there was grimness in his eye.

“But how did you get into the house? It’s surrounded,” she said.

“Not at the back. I came through the stables and the yard. Let’s have a look out.”

He snapped off the light and peered out as I had done. After a moment he cautiously raised the window and thrust out his head.

The shutter had swung open and the roar of the mob came into the room like a tempest. Then, startlingly, there was a click, and the room was flooded with light, leaving Dolan in full relief as he leaned out.

A howl of recognition rose from the street, with a crackle-crackle from a dozen revolvers. Dolan whipped back with a cat-like leap and flashed to the other side of the room, where Miss Ranon stood with her hand still on the electric-button.

In a moment the room was dark again.

He shut the window, drew the curtains carefully and once more switched on the light. Then he looked at the *señorita*, and she met his eye, white but unflinching.

“You almost got me that time,” he remarked grimly, and turned to me: “She’s of the breed of the tiger. If you don’t control her with your eye she’ll have you by the throat.”

“My hand was on the button. I swear it was an accident—”

“I wouldn’t swear,” advised Dolan. “Look out!” as another bullet split through shutters and blinds and brought down a cloud of plaster from the ceiling.

“We’d better go into another room,” I suggested, and our queer trio went out and down the hall to a smaller chamber, with no window on the street.

“And now, how did you get here?” demanded Dolan turning his attention again to me.

“Never mind that. The question is:

How are we going to get out?" I replied.

"That gang may break in at any moment."

"Faith, you never spoke a truer word," said Dolan, slapping his great thigh. "I'd never come back if I'd known the state of things. But we can get out the way I got in, and my opinion is that we'd better slip away as much like little mice as we can. Those fellows won't hurt our lady friend here."

"The sooner the better," I assented.

Dolan sat in a brown study for a moment. Then, at a louder outburst from outdoors, he said briskly: "Well, let's be going."

He led the way through the house, with which he seemed to be perfectly acquainted, down the back stairs to the kitchen, where we found the servants collected in total darkness and panic. The *señorita* followed us, and as Dolan opened the door, she drew me aside.

"Call the strikers! They only want him," she whispered.

"Here, none of that!" cried Dolan, turning savagely.

"Remember what I said," she called after me.

I glanced back and saw her in the doorway, in the light of a match that Dolan struck, her flushed, delicate face clear in the glow, and I thought that I would never see anything so perfect and terrible again. If she had called me back I would have stayed with her, I believe, but the match went out and the door shut behind us.

We crossed a brick-paved yard in the darkness and went into a great building full of the odor of a stable. Dolan went on unhesitatingly, then stopped, fumbled a moment, and a small door opened.

Outside was a lane, lighted by a street arc fifty yards away, and there was no one in sight.

Dolan led down this lane for a few yards, then we scaled a fence and found ourselves in the darkness of a vacant lot. After crossing this we came out upon a quiet back street, ill-lighted and very little built upon. The noise of the mob sounded faint and far behind.

"We're fairly safe now, if nobody spots," Dolan broke silence for the first time. "Where do you want to go?"

"Anywhere out of Vermilion," I said. "Where's the railway station?"

"Three blocks, straight ahead. You'll not come back here any more."

"Well, I'm prospecting in the hills near here—"

"You've heard more than was good for you here. I don't know how you got to that house, nor what the young lady has been telling you, but I'll tell you one thing more. I'm a hard man to go up against."

"Oh, the young lady told me that," I remarked.

"Freeze to it then, and don't meddle where you've no business. You'll not come back to Vermilion any more. The station's there where you see the red lights. Good-by."

I was left by myself in the obscurity and I felt terribly alone. I was weak and sore and stiff as well. The red and green glow of the switch lamps looked like warning signals to me, and I was mortally afraid to approach them. I might be recognized, or rather, again mistaken for a man I was not.

While I hung in an agony of fear and doubt, a sound cut short my perplexity. A far-away railway whistle split the night, the blast of a passenger-train.

That train would take me out of danger. I had no idea where it was going, but I wanted it, and I hobbled as quickly as I could toward the station.

The train was coming very fast, and it rolled clanging into the station before me. There was a moment of bustle. I crossed the tracks, ran past the hissing locomotive, and I heard a voice cry:

"Garfield, Spokane, Seattle! All aboard!"

There was no time to take a ticket. As the train went past me I jumped for the steps of the smoker and scrambled aboard just before the vestibule was closed.

The brakeman stared insolently at me as I passed him, and I realized for the first time that my clothes were torn almost into rags. But I did not care; the lights of Vermilion were dropping behind, and I was safe.

Then the memory of my destitute condition reminded me that I could not go far. Besides, I would have to return for my hidden prospecting kit, though the mining outlook was a gloomy one.

My money was almost gone; I had no burro, and I could not buy another. Failure seemed certain, and I felt as sick and sore mentally as I did physically.

Then I recollected that Crawford at the mine office had snatched up a hundred dollars and thrust it into my coat-pocket.

It was not likely to be there still, after the *mêlée* I had been through, yet I rummaged anxiously. At last, in the inside pocket I touched a package that had the greasy feel of bank-notes. Somebody must have put it in that safer place while I lay senseless.

I pulled it out. It was a package of twenty twenty-dollar bills. Crawford in his hurry must have picked up a bundle of twenties instead of fives.

I stared at this unexpected treasure-trove, almost trembling.

Would I give it back? Not much! For here was capital enough to carry out my first plan of going to the Alaska mines, with a fighting chance of success. The thought of Jessie came back to me like a pure breath through the murderous intrigues that had surrounded me, and I thanked Heaven that I had been saved from treachery to her, and I swore that I would come back with the money that Pill needed, or come back on ice.

After all, that package of twenty-dollar bills would be charged to Dolan's account, and I felt that the Irishman owed me at least four hundred dollars indemnity.

I peeled off one of the bills and paid my fare to Seattle. I longed for a sleeping-car berth, but dared not ask for it in my tattered and disreputable condition, so I coiled myself on the seat and fell into a deep stupor of exhaustion.

I knew nothing more of the journey, and when I awoke the sun was on my head and we were rattling through the yards of Seattle.

I scarcely breakfasted, so impatient was I to be about my embarkation for the north. I soon saw that there would be no difficulty about getting any kind of transportation, for half the windows and walls along the water-front were posted with advertisements of steamers for the gold-fields.

I chose the one which sailed soonest, and paid sixty dollars for a passage on

the Bolivia to Juneau. Then I set to work to outfit myself as cheaply as I dared, and when it was over I had a great heap of kit and provisions and about two hundred dollars left.

This amount would take me from Juneau to Dawson, and leave me with—I scarcely dared to think how much—to last me while I fought for Pill's honor, for Jessie's happiness, and for my own.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WRECK OF THE BOLIVIA.

THE Bolivia was one of that heterogeneous fleet that had been hastily mustered from all the seas of the world to supply the sudden demand for transport to Alaska.

She had a history, I was told; she had been a smuggler, a filibuster, a South Sea trader. Once she had been a sound steamer of some one thousand five hundred tons, and now she was a marine vagabond, rusty, unpainted, very insufficiently engined, but good enough to carry the gold-seekers, who would have embarked on a raft if it had offered them passage cheaply.

We had not many gold-seekers on our passenger-list, however, as it happened. There were half a dozen miners, a couple of gamblers, two government officials, and that was all. There were also half a dozen dogs, and, I suppose, a crew of ten or fifteen men.

We sailed from Seattle early in the morning, in a dead calm, but off Vancouver Island the wind came up, blowing from the east. It freshened as the mountains disappeared behind us, and being the possessor of a sensitive stomach, I began to be uneasy.

The sun went down cloudy, with scarcely a tinge of color, and it turned cold. The sea grew rougher, and I looked eagerly for the time when we would turn up the inside channel in the shelter of the islands.

But during the night I was awakened by deathly sickness, and found the steamer rolling fearfully. A heavy sea was running, and at every plunge I could hear the crash of water on the decks overhead.

For the rest of that night I suffered

all the horrors of the worst sort of seasickness, but in the morning I dragged myself on deck, in the hope that the fresh air would relieve me.

A furious gale was blowing from the east. The sky was gray as lead and so was the sea, through which the Bolivia labored painfully.

Her decks were streaming, and at intervals of half a minute she took a flood of water aboard that rushed foaming to and fro before it poured through the rail again.

The land to the eastward had disappeared, and I was told that we were being blown far out of our course.

By noon the gale had increased so considerably that the passengers were ordered to stay below. To me this did not matter. I lay wretchedly in my bunk, and when I heard that we had failed to make the shelter of the islands, that we were traveling more west than north, and that the engines were quite unable to make headway against the gale, the news left me quite unmoved.

I would have been relieved if I had heard that we were going ashore on the coast of Japan; and in my worst spasms I think that I would have given all the gold in Alaska and Pill's liberty into the bargain for a few yards of blessed, dry, motionless earth.

That night was full of a continuous nightmare. The Bolivia reeled and plunged, groaning and creaking and banging as if she were going to pieces.

The dawn brought no change, and the gale was unabated. We were now far out on the Pacific.

But during the afternoon the wind slackened somewhat, and the steamer was headed more to the north again. With the seas thus abeam her rolling increased, and almost everybody was sick.

I felt that I could live no longer, and I really hoped that I was dying.

I think it was some hours after midnight when I was aroused from my lethargy of wretchedness by a sudden heavy jar, and then a terrible crash that seemed to shatter all our framework. I was hurled out of my bunk upon the floor, and I felt something grinding hard under the ship's bottom.

But I lay where I fell, too sick to move or care. There was a crashing at

her bows; I heard the dash of the surf, and knew that we must have run ashore.

On deck there was a great trampling, a wild shouting, and then two shots fired. Everybody had run up above, and I was alone in the cabin.

I was too ill to move, but finally, the fear of death overcame my nausea, and I crawled up to the deck.

An icy chill struck me with the open air, and a queer, cold odor. All our lights were out, and over our bow towered a vast bulk that glimmered white through the darkness.

It seemed to extend indefinitely on either side, and the sea burst upon it in mighty breakers.

Spray was flying over our decks, too, and the steam was blowing off deafeningly. I thought I saw my shipmates forward and I hurried to the bows, but found them deserted.

The Bolivia was jammed against the white coast with her bows elevated high, as if she rested on some reef under the water. At every heave there was a terrible splitting sound amidships.

But this was not the land. The pale glimmer of the cliffs, the cold, the smell of frost brought it home to me that we had struck an iceberg.

Near the stern a lantern suddenly gleamed, and there I dimly saw a huddled crowd of struggling men. They were trying to lower a boat, and there was a furious scramble to get aboard.

I heard some one bellowing threats, orders, and then came the red flash of a revolver again.

My seasickness saved my life just then, for I was too weak to fall into a panic. I realized that I would have no chance in that insane crowd, and I stayed where I was at the bows.

In another moment the boat went overboard, clumsily slipped too soon, and there was a terrible shriek, instantly silenced, from the wretches who were in it.

The mob surged to another boat, and the frenzied struggle began over again. Shot after shot was fired; I saw dark forms on the deck, trampled as the fight swayed over them.

And all the while I felt that terrible rending and giving at the center of the ship's frame, though I did not know what it portended.

But before the second boat could be lowered there was a splitting crash, and a great gap opened suddenly midway across the deck. Then I knew what was going to happen, and I yelled my warning.

Half the crowd started toward me, but the gap had already spread too wide to be leaped. The ship seemed to gape open like a mouth.

A terrible hissing arose below, and an immense volume of hot steam spouted up, enshrouding the whole scene. I felt the fabric tremble under my feet and the rending noise grew louder.

A smooth wave suddenly ran up the deck and wet me to the waist, and when the steam blew aside the whole after-part of the ship was gone.

She had broken in two and sunk, and her men with her.

This catastrophe smote me with ter-

ror, and I thought the forward half was about to follow the stern. The prow of the steamer was scarcely twenty feet from where the ice rose high and sloping. An athlete could have jumped the gap.

I was no athlete, but I fixed a life-belt round my waist and jumped. I fell short; I went under a smother of icy foam. The surf wrenched at me, but I struggled furiously till my feet touched something solid and slippery.

I tried to stand, fell, and a breaker lifted me, banged me violently against the ice and left me, panting, at the edge of the surf line. From there I crawled, scrambling and slipping, to a place of more safety.

Here I lay flat, my seasickness gone, but weak, wet, and chilled to the bone, the rugged ice under me, and nothing visible round me but the white tumultuous crests of the rushing surf.

(To be continued.)

SIX HOURS ON THE RACK.

By ROBERT RUSSELL.

Being the account of what happened to a young man with a bank account which was temporarily of no use to him, and a girl who brought about an unexpected finish to the adventure.

I HAD only three minutes to catch my train. The entrance to the Grand Central Station was still a block away, and I was carrying a dress-suit case.

One may easily picture my condition when, the remaining block having been covered, I rushed breathless through the swinging-door and into the arm of Bess—almost.

The final cry of "All aboard for the two-thirty!" rang in my ears, the gate clanged, and I stood before the girl whom no sense of my own unworthiness had been able to make me forget.

"Jack Lawrence! I was never so glad to see any one in my life," she exclaimed. "I don't care if I have made you miss your train. You simply have *got* to look out for me for a few hours and help me in a most ridiculous situation."

With my gradually returning breath came the realization of the unimportance of catching a miserable train.

"I will tell you all about it," she continued, "but first I must lie down somewhere and get rid of this splitting headache. I know how men hate girls who faint. Afterward we can have dinner, and you may put me on the midnight train to Boston, where I am going to visit the Wheelers."

I assured her that habit alone had been the cause of my mad anxiety to make that particular train, and that the twelve o'clock over the Central, taking me direct to the city where we both lived, would be fully as convenient for me.

I had placed her in the care of the lady's-maid at the hotel directly opposite the station, and was about to leave, when she called me back.

"Now, don't fail to rescue me at half past six. And, Jack, I had almost forgotten; I will have to ask you to cash a fifty-dollar check for me. It is ridiculous, but like the improvident girl

I am, I reached New York without enough money to take me to Boston, and with only a check of father's. That was one reason why I was so glad to see you. Good-by until six-thirty. What a lark this would be if my head would only stop aching!"

She was gone to submit to the ministrations of the maid, leaving me aghast at the contemplation of certain pertinent facts.

My pockets contained a ticket home, several letters, and—exactly three dollars. To confess my inability to help Bess was absolutely out of the question. The appalling situation became worse with continued thought.

A pawn-shop immediately occurred to me, and my hand instinctively sought my waistcoat-pocket, only to find a cheap watch loaned by my jeweler while my own was being repaired. And I happened to be wearing a bow-tie, so there was no scarf-pin to fall back upon. My valise contained absolutely nothing of value.

With a last despairing hope I examined my pocketbook once more. The ticket and the three one-dollar bills were there, and a *blank check*.

The bell-boys must have wondered at the sight of an apparently respectable man consumed with inward mirth after a glance at a little slip of paper; but my relief did not permit of absolute self-restraint.

Of course, I had four hours before my engagement with Bess, plenty of money in my home bank, and at least two good friends in New York.

It took but a moment to ascertain George Baldwin's business address, and but little longer to reach his office. I found, however, that to obtain a hearing from a busy New York lawyer was attended with more difficulty, and during my long wait before being announced I had ample opportunity to recall my past intimacy with "Lucky George."

His greeting was the essence of cordiality, and his inquiries numerous. I finally explained my position, and prepared to draw a check for seventy-five dollars.

Like the collapse of a balloon his manner changed.

"Really, Jack, you have caught me at a most inopportune time," he said. "My

life insurance comes due next week, and will take every cent I can spare."

"See here, George," I replied with some heat, "it is a check I want cashed, not a loan."

He apparently saw the distinction, but failed to recognize the difference.

"I know, Jack, and I am awfully sorry, but I have just five dollars cash in my pocket, the banks are closed, and I do not believe there is seventy-five dollars in the building. However, we can step into Dwyer's office next door and see if he can cash your check. Of course," magnanimously, "I will endorse it and vouch for your honesty. I hope I do not have to tell him that it is eight years since I last saw you."

Dwyer proved to be a good-natured sort of rotund person, and stated impressively that he was honored to meet me. The mention of the check, however, seemed to bring to his mind some sad, sad incident of a closed past. One could almost imagine the brute capable of human feeling as he turned his now pathetic eyes upon me.

"My boy, it is only the lack of seventy-five dollars that keeps me in this wretched town at this time of year. Seventy-five dollars would keep me at Atlantic City for three days. Seventy-five dollars would buy me all the cooling beverages that I could drink during the whole of the coming summer; and"—his flabby pathos was absolutely nauseating—"seventy-five dollars would give to my dear little ones—"

But I waited to hear no more, and hastily reentered George's office, leaving him to make whatever excuses he deemed necessary. Was it my imagination, or had I detected the sedate George in the act of winking at Dwyer on his first mention of the check?

In a moment Baldwin returned, again apologizing for his inability to favor me, and indicating pretty plainly that he was an extremely busy man. The entrance of a clerk with two one-hundred-dollar bills, which he handed George, did not seem to calm that person.

"Oh, yes," unhesitatingly lied Baldwin—"the money for salaries."

"Are you going to pay us to-day, sir, instead of Saturday?" The young man was certainly interested.

"Shut up," snapped his employer.

It began to dawn on my dull comprehension that Baldwin was afraid to cash my check. The miserable hypocrite *had* winked at Dwyer.

Humiliated to a greater degree than I had ever been in my life, I stopped in at a drug-store and secured the address of dear old Billy Golden. Billy had never liked "Lucky" at college, and would revel in the story.

It was years since I had seen Golden, but his contagious smile still possessed the same old winning quality.

"You old reprobate!" were his first words. "It is almost ten years since I repaid you the last fiver I borrowed. To see you almost makes one forget the financial situation."

For an hour our talk brought up so many almost forgotten incidents that my experience with Baldwin completely slipped my mind. I was just about to mention it, and ask Bill to cash the check, when he became extremely serious.

"Say, Jack"—and the best fellow in the world was looking absently at an extremely uninteresting document on his desk—"it's an awful brash thing to do, but I guess the years have not made much difference between us."

His glance moved to a photograph hanging over his desk.

"Everything I had saved during the last five years is tied up in a bank which has closed its doors," he continued. "Every one says that we depositors are going to get our money in time, but just now I have not a dollar to my name. The little woman is sick"—his difficulty in continuing was painfully apparent—"and I am absolutely strapped. Have you still enough faith in me to help us over this rough place?"

Why is it that one sometimes has the impulse to smile in the face of a great calamity?

It did not take me long to assure Billy that his worry need be short-lived if he could use a check. His relief and pathetic appreciation made his enjoyment of my tale about Baldwin most intense; but on hearing of my difficulty he immediately became serious once more.

"But the terrible part of this is, Jack, that I cannot help you. If the bank where I used to do business were open, or any

one of several where I am known, I could get your check cashed in a minute. But you would not believe how foolish people here are about cashing checks just now, and every one knows my name and credit are worthless. What in the world can we do?"

For five minutes he sat in a study of the deepest brown. Then I had my second inspiration of the day.

The business that had brought me to New York! The man with whom I had been put in communication by some real-estate brokers of my own city!

That very morning he had practically agreed to buy my place on the Hudson, which for several years had been an elephant on my hands. He certainly was wealthy, and of course could get my check cashed for me.

That he would be at home that evening I knew, as he had said as much to me in case I wanted to confer further with him.

Bill's relief was almost as great as my own, and we parted at peace with the world—he with the knowledge that his wife might have care and comfort, and I with the prospect of a whole evening with Bess.

The clock of Trinity Church pointed to six as I hurried from the building in the fear that I might be late for my appointment at the hotel. I was obliged to break one of my dollar-bills to procure a Subway ticket, but I felt secure of affluence now.

The cost of dinner did not worry me at all, as I was certain any hotel would receive a check in payment for service. If necessary, I could leave my grip as security until I saw my wealthy acquaintance.

Bess was entirely recovered from her headache, and eager for a sight of the gayest part of the city. She insisted on being "thoroughly unconventional," as she expressed it; which meant taking a hansom, and dining at one of Broadway's most interesting restaurants.

The low-browed cabby depleted my store of cash by two dollars, leaving ninety-five cents to remind me of former prosperous days.

My experiences with Baldwin and Dwyer had certainly made me extremely distrustful of my ability to inspire confidence; but Bess's evident enjoyment of

the dinner, the music, and the lights completely banished from my mind every vestige of worry. Absolutely did I give myself up to the pleasure of the moment.

But the time for reckoning came, and, excusing myself on the plea of a remembered telephone message, I entered the next room and confidently approached the cashier's desk.

To my request that he should cash a small check the man gave a curt refusal. Somewhat alarmed, I asked if he would permit me to settle my dinner bill in that manner.

He seemed somewhat interested at this suggestion, and spoke to me with considerable force.

"My dear sir, you must be a stranger in New York, or you would know that checks at this time are little better than so much waste paper. We refuse to cash them even for some of our regular customers, and to grant such a favor to a stranger, not even in evening-dress, would be absurd. You must pay your check."

Mastering my indignation as best I could, I explained that I was on my way to get a check cashed, and would leave my dress-suit case as security until I returned with the necessary funds. Without further comment, he ordered a waiter to bring my bag from the coat-room.

An impertinent investigation of its contents, accomplished before I realized his purpose, seemed to lower me several degrees in his estimation. Then he spoke to the point.

"I think not, sir. I see you are dining with a lady, and do not wish to embarrass you unnecessarily, if your story is true. I would not take this stuff as security for a cigar, but I can assist you with a suggestion. As you put on your overcoat—I presume you do own an overcoat—slip off the coat you now have on and give it to the boy. Having no other suit in your grip, which fact I ascertained by examination, I will feel pretty safe that you will at least try to pay your check later and get back your coat. I will instruct the boy."

I am strong, and have had some experience with my fists. Yet the person remained unharmed. A future trip to New York for a special purpose became, however, a fixed determination.

What was there to do that would leave Bess in her peaceful ignorance of the situation? There was but one answer—submit.

I removed my coat behind a screen while Bess was adjusting her hat and wrap. We emerged from the restaurant, she thoroughly alive to the brilliancy about her, I to the lack of my coat.

As we stood a moment watching the pleasure-seekers hurrying past, each glance that I intercepted seemed to convey: "There is something wanting about that man."

My childish memory of the great void made by the loss of a tooth was as nothing compared to my present consciousness of the juxtaposition of waistcoat and overcoat.

At length in desperation I hailed a cab, asking Bess if she would mind driving through Central Park to Seventy-Second Street, to enable me to make a five-minute business call. Everything pleased her, and a drive in the warm spring evening was apparently the most delightful suggestion I could have made.

The assurance that my worries would shortly be at an end, the delicious fragrance of the green things about us, and the nearness of the girl, brought to me a peace beyond all understanding. I believe even the absence of my collar or a shoe would have been forgotten.

Ushered into Mr. Brown's library, I checked my involuntary movement to remove my overcoat in time to prevent an exposé of more than one shirt-sleeve. For the third time I explained my trouble, and requested the man to cash my check.

When I had finished, his shrewd eyes appeared to my benumbed imagination as two needle-points. With a quiet desperation that frightened me I heard him through.

"I am a just man, I hope," he said. "My money came hard, and it will go as it came. I may wrong you, but I prefer to take that chance rather than to risk losing a penny through credulity. I will not accuse, or refer to the wonderfully plausible swindlers that have imposed on many men during the past months, hard-fisted bank presidents and directors. I will buy your house if you own it, but I will not cash your check."

I thank my protecting spirit now that I

remembered the girl waiting for me. Without speaking, I left the man and went out to her.

Every thought of my mind was logical, and my plans formed themselves with wonderful clearness. I would dismiss the cab, giving the driver my suit-case and contents for his pay; walk with Bess through the park; confess my position to her, and my foolish attempt to keep her in ignorance; call up Billy Golden at his home, and arrange for her to pass the night with his wife; get a check cashed when the banks opened in the morning, and finally bring upon four persons the retribution they deserved.

The cabby was dismissed thoroughly satisfied, Bess thinking he was to take my valise to the hotel. The idea of the walk seemed to please her, and we were half-way through the park before she suggested a moment's rest.

The stars were appearing now, and 't was very quiet. Perhaps the solemn peace

of the grass and trees about us made stronger than I could resist the longing to forget the humiliations of the day. Completely side-tracking my explanation so logically planned, I made another confession to her.

I heard a squirrel in the tree near us, and then:

"I think I won't go to Boston, Jack. I think I will go home. So of course you will not have to cash that check, as I have my pass on the Central."

Bess with a pass and I with a ticket—home. A quarter for the porter, my suit-case and my coat for those caring for such things, and thirty-five cents for the following telegram:

JOSIAH BROWN, ESQ.,
2 West 72d Street,
NEW YORK CITY.

Negotiations off. House to contain recently acquired jewel of value far beyond your comprehension.

JOHN LAWRENCE.

LAND OF LOST HOPE.*

By JOHNSTON McCULLLEY.

Certain weird experiences of a doctor who responded to
a call in the night which made him a prisoner of honor.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

A young San Francisco physician, Robert Berkley by name, decoyed to the cabin of the schooner *Manatee* by the feigned illness of her captain, Stomble, finds himself being carried out to sea. He is treated with the greatest respect, but can learn nothing of his destination except that good fortune awaits him in the country to which he is going, and that he can never return to his native land. A beautiful young girl named Callisa is a member of the party on the schooner.

As darkness is falling they are overtaken by a United States cruiser which demands to search them, and sends off a small boat for the purpose. When the boat is but a short way from the schooner, Berkley hears the captain say to the mate: "All ready, Mr. Giles."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BATTLE OF THE LIGHTS.

BERKLEY had his eyes on the approaching boat. Suddenly he felt the *Manatee* spring forward. She gathered speed as rapidly as possible, her screws churning the water into foam.

There was a cry of rage from the small boat, which was nearly swamped.

*Began May ARGOSY. Single copies, 10 cents.

"You're running away from them!" Berkley exclaimed.

"Certainly!" replied Captain Stomble. "And in the darkness the cruiser will be careful how she shoots. It will be a few minutes before she realizes what has happened; it is too dark for them to see. We haven't a single light burning. And they cannot give chase until they pick up that boat."

"She may put a shot through us, nevertheless," said Berkley.

"If you are afraid, sir, you had better go to the cabin," was the captain's answer.

Even as he spoke there was a report of a heavy gun, but no shell shrieked over the Manatee.

"They know something's wrong," said the captain. "That is a signal-gun!"

By watching the cruiser's lights they could see that she was under way, but moving slowly. Then they noticed a signal from the small boat, made with a light.

"It'll take her some time to get ready to follow," chuckled Captain Stomble. "And she can't do much in the dark."

"You expect to escape her before morning?" Berkley asked.

"I hope to," the captain replied.

"But—"

Berkley's remark was not concluded. A shaft of light shot from the cruiser toward the skies, moved downward to the water, swept the sea back and forth, and finally came to rest, bearing upon the Manatee. It was as light as day on the deck.

"You can never escape her search-light," said Berkley.

As Berkley spoke, the white glare of the search-light was taken off the Manatee and began sweeping the ocean for the small boat. After this had been located, the cruiser's course was changed so that the boat could be picked up.

The Manatee changed her course, too, and continued at high speed on her new one. Berkley wondered whether the chase would be kept up throughout the night.

Captain Stomble left him and sought out the mate. For several minutes they held close conversation, then the captain returned to Berkley.

"If you will pardon me," he said, "I will ask you to return to your cabin or the ladies' salon. We are about to play a ruse which we never allow any one to witness except members of the crew. If you will watch from the port-holes you will be able to see the chase as well as from here."

"You do not mean to attempt an injury to the cruiser!" cried Berkley.

"No," replied the captain, "we are simply going to try a trick, that is all."

Berkley turned away without another word, and went to the salon. Callisa and Gruba welcomed him in their characteristic manner.

"Does the other boat still follow?" the girl asked.

"Yes," answered Berkley.

He had taken up his station by the port-hole. The girl went over to him. But she did not look out of the port-hole.

The cruiser had stopped to pick up the boat, Berkley saw, and was now coming on again. Suddenly, out from the side of the Manatee, not far from Berkley, shot a shaft of light. It played upon the cruiser. Evidently the Manatee carried a search-light, too, and in an unusual place.

As Berkley watched, the light turned to red. Then it went green. The physician began to be interested deeply. Yet he failed to see how the colored light would throw the cruiser off the track.

Now the cruiser's light was in use again, and spotted the schooner. Instantly the schooner's light was thrown upon that of the cruiser, and it showed red. From some other place forward a green light glowed, and this, too, played upon the white light of the cruiser. The combination was weird. And evidently the cruiser was puzzled.

Suddenly the cruiser's light went out, and at the same time the lights of the Manatee vanished, and the schooner's course was changed quickly again. When next the cruiser's light flashed forth it had some difficulty in locating the Manatee.

Berkley noticed with amazement that the schooner had gained a little.

For an hour the battle of the lights kept up, while the ships rushed through the water, and the Manatee tried to get away. Then Berkley noticed what had not struck him before—that the lights from the Manatee were being poured upon the search-light of the cruiser with intensity enough to blind the operator of the cruiser's light.

It became evident that when the cruiser's light went out, from time to time, it was to change operators. Berkley could realize how that colored glare would confuse a man until his eyes would be useless.

And every time the cruiser's light went out, the schooner's course would be changed in such a manner that she would gain upon her pursuer.

Finally, wearied from watching the lights, Berkley turned his tired eyes from the port-hole, and looked over the salon.

Callisa still stood beside him, watching his every movement. Old Gruba was in her customary position in the corner, half concealed by the draperies.

"Will the master please to rest?" Callisa asked.

He allowed her to lead him to the couch. Then he reclined, while she sat near him, watching him closely. Presently he took one of her hands in his.

"Is it a beautiful land—the one to which I am being taken?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered.

"There are flowers there?"

"Flowers, and green, and music—everywhere music."

"Do you think I'll be happy there?"

"I hope so, my master."

"And can't you tell me something more about it now?"

"Pardon, master, but I cannot."

"Then, if I can't get off this ship and escape, I only hope that we'll reach this fabled land at an early date," he announced.

"There will be a royal welcome for you, master. Every one awaits your coming."

"They do, eh? That is pleasant."

"You will be pleased, master. And I'll be pleased—if you are happy."

"What do I have to do when I get there? I know there's some string to this proposition."

"I cannot reveal that, master."

"No, I suppose not! Will they let me get married?"

She looked up quickly.

"Oh, yes, master! You'll be obliged to marry."

"That so? Well, that'll not be so bad, perhaps."

"Master's bride awaits him."

"What?" he cried.

"She is very beautiful, and good."

"I'm pleased to hear it. What's her name?"

"Pardon, master; I cannot tell."

"Does she look anything like you, Callisa?"

His voice was tender. But, instead of looking up at him, she bent her head, and her words were so low he could scarcely hear them.

"Master does not understand. It will be better, master, not to say more of this. Sometimes words make wounds."

"Why, Callisa! I don't understand. I didn't mean to wound you."

"I know you didn't, master."

Berkley glanced at old Gruba. Then he reached down and drew Callisa near him.

"Listen," he said, "and do not be offended. If my bride looks like you, I shall be very happy and shall like this land very much. If she is you, Callisa. Don't you understand? Callisa, I love you!"

He was whispering now, so that old Gruba could not hear. For a moment the girl made no move, then she lifted her eyes and looked into his.

"Thank you, master," she said sweetly.

"You love me, Callisa?"

"Please do not ask, master."

"You love me?" he persisted.

"Be careful, master. Yes—I love you!"

"Then we shall be very happy."

"No, master; we can never be happy—except in knowing that we love each other."

"What do you mean, Callisa?"

"We can never be happy together, master."

"Why?"

"I cannot tell you."

"You'll not marry me?" he asked.

"Master, it would make me very happy to marry you. I would be your slave, master. But I cannot."

"Why?"

"A bride awaits you."

"But I love you!"

"And I love you, master; but that makes no difference. There is the law."

"When a man and a woman love each other, and neither is married, then they may marry—that is the law."

"But not our law, master."

"Wherein does your law differ?"

"Master will learn soon—when we arrive. I cannot tell you."

Berkley looked across at Gruba again. The old woman was watching him closely.

"Callisa," he murmured, "I'll marry

no one but you. I love you, dear—love you! I could take you in my arms, little girl and smother you with kisses!”

“It would be pleasant, master!”

“But I may not!” he said, remembering what she had told him before.

“You may, master!”

“But—you said it would mean death for you!”

“It would, master.”

“Then—”

“I can die—for you! I could die with music on my lips, if you kissed me!”

Berkley looked at her for a moment, pressed her close, then placed her on the couch, and walked across the salon. That look in her eyes had struck deep into his heart.

She would die—for a kiss.

Presently he turned back to her.

“My lips shall not touch yours now,” he said. “Your life is too precious to me. But let us hope, Callisa—let us hope there shall come some way in which we may love within my law and yours.”

The girl sprang to her feet.

“Hope!” she cried. “It is a forbidden word!”

“It is the one word that links earth and heaven together,” he said.

“You do not understand,” she replied.

“It is a forbidden word. - In my country one can do almost anything—but hope.”

“Why is that? What do you mean, Callisa?”

“My country has a peculiar name, in a language which you have never heard. The name means—Land of Lost Hope!”

Berkley smiled.

“Callisa,” he said, “no one can stop a man hoping. He can always hope in his heart.”

“But when you see how hopeless it is—that it is of no use! When you learn, master, that to hope is folly—when you cry out your eyes and eat away your heart from hoping—then, master, your heart will become hard. Even in my short life, master, I have seen it.”

“And yet you say your land is the land of flowers and music! How can there be music without hope?”

“In time the mind conquers the heart, master; one learns to gather contentment that is within his reach when he cannot get the joy he seeks. One learns to have no thought of self.”

“But I was given to understand that I was to have some thoughts of myself. I was told I would be given much money.”

“So you will, master,” she replied; “but how shall you spend it?”

“Why, as any one spends it—to buy things, to enjoy life, to get that which I desire.”

“We never buy things in my country, master. You cannot use your money. You will be given gold—much gold, perhaps—but it will be as useless as sand on the shores of the sea. In my country gold is nothing, except to use when the ship is compelled to visit the world outside.”

“Then, what do you use as money?”

She looked at him peculiarly.

“Master,” she said, “we have no money!”

“No money!”

“We have no need for it. A person has what he wants of anything, so long as he obeys the law.”

“But this gold which I am to receive is of value in the outside world. I will be wealthy when I take it there. It will purchase comforts, luxuries.”

“Master forgets one thing,” she answered. “He will never see the outside world again!”

“Great Scott!” The exclamation forced its way to Berkley’s lips. “I’ll have a fortune,” he said half to himself, “but never a chance to spend it. I knew there was a string to this thing somewhere.”

He left Callisa and walked to the port-hole again. The cruiser was not to be seen. She was on the other side of the schooner, Berkley thought.

But, as he looked, there came a blinding flash that seemed to come from the deck—the crash of an explosion!

He heard screams and cries.

Then, darkness and silence!

CHAPTER IX.

QUESTIONS THAT CANNOT BE ANSWERED.

BERKLEY sprang away from the port-hole with a cry, and reached Callisa’s side. But old Gruba was already there.

“Stand back!” warned Callisa. “Old Gruba must do her duty.”

The master may not come near me when it is dark and Gruba cannot see!"

"Something has happened!" Berkley exclaimed.

He rushed to the door.

"Begley! Begley!" he cried, throwing it open.

"Here, master!"

"There has been an accident. Quick! Help me with the women!"

"There is no accident, master!"

"That flash, that explosion!"

"It was all arranged, master."

"But the lights are out."

"And may not be turned on again, master, until we are out of sight. If master will go on deck, he will understand."

"But the women—"

"Will be safe, master."

Berkley turned toward them.

"Shall you be afraid to remain here alone?"

"No, master," Callisa replied.

Berkley went out, closing the door, and rushed to the deck. The first person he met was Giles.

"What is it?" Berkley cried. "What has happened?"

"A trick, sir."

"What sort of a trick?"

"To throw the cruiser off the track, sir. Captain Stomble will be here presently and explain."

The mate hurried away. Berkley could see that the men were doing something upon the deck. Far astern was the search-light of the cruiser playing on a spot in the ocean.

Soon Captain Stomble stood beside him.

"It grieves me if you were startled," he said. "I'll explain. First, we blind their men with our lights. At the same time we work away from them. When we have reached a proper distance, my men arrange something upon the deck. A match is struck; there is a flash, the report of an explosion, the men shriek and scream. Those on the cruiser see the flash, hear the report and the screams. They think there has been an explosion. The Manatee rushes away without a light on her. The cruiser's search-light haunts the spot where the flash occurred. Were you back there, sir, you might see bits of wreckage floating about."

"I see," said Berkley.

"Being humane, the cruiser's commander will order out boats to pick up survivors," continued the captain. "Before he realizes his mistake—if he does at all—we'll be far away; out of sight, in fact."

"A fine scheme," said Berkley. "But some day, captain, it may fail to work."

"Then there'll be other schemes to try," was the captain's answer.

Berkley walked about the deck. He saw where sheets of iron had been placed, and upon these, it was evident, the powder had been spread to cause the flash. He did not understand what had caused the crash of the explosion, and made a mental note to ask the captain later.

After an hour, Berkley approached the captain again.

"I believe I'll turn in," he said.

"Will you please have me called if there is any more excitement during the night?"

"Certainly," said the captain. "But you may rest easy. I doubt if we see the cruiser again."

Followed by Begley, Berkley made his way to the cabin, and, undressing in the dark, was soon in his bunk and sound asleep. In the narrow space just outside the door Begley curled up on a mat to spend the night.

This passed without event, and the bright morning sun was streaming through a port-hole when Berkley awakened. He called Begley and ordered his bath prepared, for Berkley was getting used to having a servant and learning how to make use of one.

After his bath, he dressed, ate a hearty breakfast, then went on deck. Mr. Giles was in charge.

"A beautiful morning, sir," said the mate cordially. "May you see many such, sir!"

"Thank you," Berkley replied.

It was indeed a beautiful morning. Berkley stood by the rail for several minutes, looking out over the sea.

"Have you seen any trace of the cruiser?" he asked presently.

"Not the slightest, sir; I believe we have escaped her."

"Were you obliged to go out of your course?"

"On the contrary, sir, we turned from

the usual ship-track and ran directly into our course."

"Do you mean that you venture where vessels do not usually sail?"

"We have a track of our own," the mate replied, "but it is not a venture, sir. Every foot of the way is known to us as well as those parts of the water which are frequented by other vessels."

"How long before we reach our destination?"

"Have you not been informed, sir, that we take no reckoning of time?"

"I beg your pardon; I had forgotten," Berkley answered. "You must give a man a chance to adapt himself to this new order of things. By the way, don't we cross the usual path of vessels again before we arrive?"

"No," the mate replied. "We are sailing away from all tracks as swiftly as possible. We may not meet with another vessel."

Berkley turned away. His chance of escape, then, was gone.

He started forward. Soon he heard a bell strike, heard the hurrying of feet behind him. Looking around, he saw the members of the crew lining up before the mainmast.

Giles had stepped before them, and Captain Stomble was just appearing.

The captain wore over his shoulders a peculiar robe of yellow silk. He took up his position before the men, and to one side of Giles, and faced the rising sun.

The bell struck again.

Captain Stomble removed his cap and extended his arms toward the sun.

"There is no hope!" he cried.

And every man answered him:

"There is no hope!"

"There is life without hope!"

"There is life without hope!"

"There is peace and contentment and happiness and music without hope! Hope fosters ambition, which fosters strife! Strife is the curse of the world! Let there be no strife in the land of our hearts!"

"Amen!" came the answer.

Berkley watched, fascinated.

Soon Captain Stomble turned from the sun and approached him.

"Dr. Berkley," he whispered, "you have not been instructed as to your duties, neither may you receive such

instruction until our destination is reached. But I desire you to take your share in the worship of the morning. Kindly follow me."

He led the way forward until within a few paces of the men.

"Face the sun and repeat the words I whisper to you," the captain said.

Berkley faced the sun and extended his arms.

"It is the part of man to live long, to spread the truth. It is the part of man to dwell in peace and happiness without hope, thus preparing for the days of the hereafter when all things shall be just! The future is not a hope, but a certainty! To hope is to wish for the future, which is a sin! When the future is to be realized, a man will fly into it, and mankind cannot prevent him!"

Berkley repeated the words as well as he could. Above his voice there was not a sound, save the creaking of the rigging, the eternal swish-swash of the waves.

"It is the part of woman to bring new life into the world, and to teach her children that there is no hope!

"Things are as they are! It is sinful to wish them otherwise!

"Therefore, it is sinful to hope!

"I charge you, care for your bodies! Keep them free of disease! I charge you, care for your minds; keep them free from disease also! The truths are spoken!"

Berkley repeated the last sentence, dropped his arms, and turned toward the captain.

"Stand where you are," the captain whispered. "Do not show astonishment."

Giles advanced, knelt before Berkley, took his hand and kissed it. One by one, the members of the crew followed, doing the same. Then they turned away and went about their regular duties. Upon that, Captain Stomble knelt before Berkley, and followed suit.

When he arose he clasped the physician by the hand.

"You did it splendidly!" he cried in enthusiasm. "I am more pleased than you know!"

"But I wish you'd explain! What does all that nonsense mean?"

"No doubt it seems peculiar to you," the captain said. "When our destination is reached you will be fully informed.

The meaning of it is more beautiful than anything you have ever seen, heard, or read."

"How about the women?"

"They have ceremonies of their own. Men and women worship separately. There are certain ceremonies in which they join, of course, but they are symbolic of certain occasions. Soon after you arrive you will take part in one of the most beautiful ceremonies of the world!"

Berkley faced him resolutely.

"I wish you'd tell me just who and what I am," he said. "This thing is getting on my nerves."

"Your instruction must not come from me," was the answer.

"Well, can't you give me some idea how long we'll be on the road? This voyage is going to be monotonous."

"I trust the time will fly quickly for you. I cannot tell you how long it will be. We are now away from the outside world, and it is unlawful to consider things as that world considers them."

"I see," said Berkley.

"I have ordered the men to prepare lines for fishing. During the day we should run into schools of fish. The sport is arranged for your benefit."

"Much obliged," rejoined Berkley. "Now, if you can only arrange a wolf-hunt—"

"Dr. Berkley," said the captain, "I am honestly trying to make your days pleasant. I am doing all in my power. Do not jest at my efforts."

"I beg your pardon," replied Berkley and he meant it.

He spent the greater part of the morning on deck, reading a book he procured from the captain's cabin, and smoking. There was little of which he could complain. Begley made him comfortable; the day was beautiful; the Manatee rushed forward gallantly.

It was a life of delicious ease, and Berkley felt disgusted with himself when he remembered that he had been objecting to it. At any rate, it was evident that Captain Stomble and his crew were working under orders, and were not to blame for his situation.

He'd reserve his wrath, he decided, for the real instigator of his troubles.

Down in his heart was a curiosity to see

and learn more of the strange land to which he was going; the only drawback was the possibility—certainty, Captain Stomble called it—that he would never get to the outside world again.

He was man enough to know that there was no unknown continent in that part of the world. He guessed the strange land was a South Sea island, uncharted, which had been stumbled upon accidentally by a man with originality enough to put it to peculiar uses.

When he had tired of reading, Berkley walked about the deck for a time. He was thinking of Callisa. He wanted to be in her presence, but he feared to go to the salon.

Something told him that he was running into danger—that it would mean peril for both of them.

He felt an overwhelming love for her, but her words, the warning silence of old Gruba, the captain's speech—all told him that he should keep away from the girl.

He wondered what Callisa had meant by saying that a bride awaited him. He'd marry when he got ready, and he'd marry the girl he wanted—or he wouldn't marry at all, he told himself.

But in the next breath he whispered to the waves that perhaps he would be powerless to do as he pleased.

It was nice to be served like a prince, to associate with a woman like Callisa! But it was not natural, and Berkley wished that he was back in San Francisco working hard to get money enough to pay his necessary expenses.

CHAPTER X.

THE KISS OF DEATH.

FIFTEEN days—Berkley kept count—passed without an exciting event. The Manatee had entered tropical waters. The days were hot and the nights were warm.

Berkley had spent those fifteen days in various ways. He had read everything in the captain's cabin. He had had some royal sport fishing over the side with a heavy line. Every morning he had taken part in the peculiar ceremony.

Begley still followed at his heels, doing everything to make his master comfort-

able. Berkley was getting used to the unusual things he saw and heard, but there was still a mystery that clung about it all that, at times, almost unnerved him.

He visited the salon regularly, and sat beside Callisa, while old Gruba watched from the corner behind the draperies. Though their love for each other had grown, they seldom spoke of it, and were content with the mutual understanding that they enjoyed.

Berkley, however, realizing how strong their love was waxing, and recollecting what he had heard, feared for the future.

Then there came a perfect morning when, the usual ceremony over, Captain Stomble asked Berkley to his cabin. Once there, he offered liquor and cigars, and then began his conversation.

"We are nearing the end of our journey," he said. "It is not seemly that you should enter upon your new position in our country with any malice in your heart. You, no doubt, blame me for the part I have played in taking you from your world."

"I realize that you acted under orders," Berkley replied.

"I want to tell you again, Dr. Berkley, that aside from the fact that you will never see the outside world again, there is no reason why your existence should not be far more peaceful and happy than that of any one you have ever known. You'll have wealth—"

"Which I shall be unable to spend," Berkley interrupted.

"Not so. This vessel is for the purpose of bringing from the outside world anything you may desire. Of course, there are certain things that are outside our laws—but the things which, I think, you will desire are permissible. You will be greatly honored all your life. Your rank will be very high. I realize that you do not understand that to which you are going, and therefore you may doubt. I want to feel, however, that you hold nothing against me, nor my crew, nor those who issue orders to us. Will you deal fairly with me?"

"What's the proposition?" Berkley asked.

"Say that you hold no malice at present, and that you will go from this ship happy and contented. That is all I ask. Lay aside your malice for the time being.

If developments do not please you, that is another matter. I am merely asking you to give your new condition a trial before forming a definite prejudice or opinion."

"That's fair enough," said Berkley. "I promise you, then, that I will go from this ship without malice in my heart, and give everything a fair trial. But if, after I have done so, I find that I have been imposed upon, I'll have my vengeance in some form or other if it takes me years."

"I am content with your answer," replied Captain Stomble. "It pleases me to think that you'll land with the determination to form no opinion until you thoroughly understand your new circumstances."

"How long before we arrive?" Berkley inquired.

"I must remind you again that we keep no count of time. But I'll say this—before the sun sinks to rest we'll be in the harbor. You'll not land, however, until after the next sunrise."

"I hope I don't have to get up too early," said Berkley.

"You forget, sir, that they wait upon your pleasure—not you upon them."

"Say! Who am I, anyway?"

"Before dark, Dr. Berkley, you shall be told more. When we enter the harbor one who is entitled to speak will visit you and tender you instruction."

"I'll be glad to see him! I'd like to find out some more about this business."

"I believe you will be pleased, in spite of your doubts," said the captain.

"Well, I hope so!" exclaimed Berkley.

Captain Stomble sprang to his feet.

"Dr. Berkley!" he cried. "Whatever you do, never let that word pass your lips again!"

"What word?"

"I dare not repeat it! The word you just used!"

"Hope?"

"That is it! Never say it again!"

"What's the harm in a little word like that?"

"The laws of our country are founded in regard to it. Where we are going there is no—"

"Hope?"

"Exactly! Thank you!"

"Must be a great country!" said

Berkley. "Say, I haven't been suddenly slain and put on the road to the 'burn-slowly' land, have I?"

"You'll not jest when you understand, doctor. Now, in regard to a few more things. You are near enough to drop the name by which you were known in the outside world. Hereafter you'll be called Dr. Berkley no more. To the majority of those you meet you'll be 'master.' Others will call you by your title."

"And that is?"

"I cannot tell you now. You'll be instructed within a few hours."

"Any other suggestions?"

"Yes. If you care to visit the women again, you must do so to-day. They will leave the ship at sunrise to-morrow, before you. Bid them farewell."

"Why?"

"You may never see them again. And if you do, after you have landed, it will be under different conditions. This will be about your last chance for a long conversation."

"What do you mean?" Berkley cried.

"Not that harm will come to them. But the laws of the country will be between you hereafter."

"Then I'll break a few laws."

"It is dangerous to break laws. Besides, there will be other women."

"I see," replied Berkley; but he didn't see at all. He was afraid to say more, however—afraid he would betray his love for Callisa.

Soon Captain Stomble left him to go on deck. Berkley sat for a time smoking and watching the sea through the port-hole. Then he arose and went to the salon, Begley trotting behind as usual.

When he opened the door Callisa was reclining on the couch. She arose when she saw him, and walked toward him across the salon.

"Master," she said softly.

"The captain has been telling me," he began, after they were seated on the couch, "that we'll reach the end of our journey before the sun sets again."

"Yes," she said.

"Are you glad, Callisa?"

"Yes—and no!"

"Why do you say that?"

"I am glad to be back in my country again, but—"

"Yes?"

"Pardon, master, but there will be no more talks with you."

"Why not?"

"We shall see each other but rarely—perhaps not at all. And it will be forbidden that I shall talk to you."

"And will that pain you?"

"Oh, master!"

"Is there no way in which we can see each other?"

"There is no way, master."

"But if I am to be powerful in this land, why cannot I arrange it?"

"You can arrange anything, master, except that which breaks the law. And such as you propose would break the law."

"Callisa," he said, "you love me?"

"Yes, master."

"You would be my wife if you could?"

"Yes, master—your slave!"

"Then, one day, you and I shall be man and wife. Do not fear, Callisa. There will be a way!"

"Alas, master, you come from a land where men and women have a right to expect things. We have no such right. Our land is the Land of Lost Hope!"

"And if love should bring hope to your unhappy land, what then?"

"That could never be, master. And our land is not unhappy. We learn to forget those things which we would possess and cannot."

"Do you mean you will forget me, Callisa?"

"Never, master! And for me the flowers will not be so beautiful, nor the music so sweet—after this!"

"I will find a way, Callisa!"

"No, master! You do not know! You will be powerless to change the law."

"You told me, that first day, that there is no strife in your land, that you do not know war. Strife and war, Callisa, can change unreasonable laws. I can fight for you."

"I do not understand what you mean, master, but as surely as there is a blessed sun to touch the flowers with beauty, so sure is it that you will be able to do nothing. Others have tried to go against the laws, and their punishment has been terrible and without name. This is our last day together, master. Perhaps I may

see you sometimes, and then I can remember that you love me. But never, after to-day, will you be able to tell me so!"

Berkley took both her hands in his.

"I cannot believe this," he said. "I am like a child going into the darkness. If it is all as you say, then indeed life for me will be meaningless. But there must be some way to conquer these conditions if they exist, and if there is, I shall find it. There may be no hope in your land, Callisa, but there is great hope in my heart."

Callisa had turned her face away, and Berkley could see that she was weeping. Old Gruba was watching them from her corner, with absolutely no trace of emotion.

Suddenly there came a rap on the door. Gruba went over and opened it, never taking her eyes off the two on the couch. In the door stood Begley.

"Captain Stomble's compliments to the master," he said, "and will the master please come on deck? There is land in sight."

"Tell the captain I'll be there in a few minutes," Berkley answered.

The door was closed, and Gruba went back to her corner.

"I must go, Callisa," he said, after a time.

She turned to him quickly.

"Then you are telling me farewell, master?"

"I'll see you again to-night."

He had risen and was crossing to the door, Callisa by his side.

"Master," she said, "tell me farewell now, now! I—I cannot bear it, master, to see you again!"

"We'll spend many happy days together yet," he answered. "I'll find a way!"

"You cannot, master, cannot! I know! I shall never get to speak to you again! And I love you so!"

Berkley was holding her in his arms. Her face was turned toward his, and in it there was a look of pain and tenderness.

"Never again!" she whispered. "And I love you so! My heart—will break—master!"

"I'll find a way, Callisa!"

"No, no, you cannot! Why, a bride

awaits you, when you land, master—a beautiful bride—"

"She could be no more beautiful than you!"

"She is of great rank, master; you'll be—very—happy!"

"Never happy without you, Callisa!"

"You must not think of me, master. I am—am nobody! You must forget—and obey the law." It will please me to see you honored. Sometimes I may see you on ceremony days. And I can remember that you loved me. But you must forget, master—forget."

"I cannot forget, Callisa."

"Farewell, master; go—go—my heart is breaking."

Berkley felt her form against his. His arms held her closer. There were tears in her eyes as she looked up at him. It seemed as though something clutched at his heart. He did not see the salon, the draperies, old Gruba close behind them! He saw nothing but those wet eyes, those trembling lips!

"Callisa! Callisa!" he cried.

"Farewell, my master! Farewell!"

"No, no, Callisa!"

"It must be! Farewell!"

He held her closer—closer. Without thinking, he lowered his face to hers. She closed her eyes. He bent nearer. Then, in a tempest of passion, he grasped her even closer still and kissed her lips again and again.

"Callisa! Callisa!" he whispered.

Behind her there was a loud cry, inarticulate. Berkley's vision cleared. He saw Gruba, her face expressive of rage.

Berkley stumbled away from Callisa, then looked at her. Her cheeks were as white as snow; there was a look of despair in her eyes.

"What—" began Berkley.

Her words came as from a distance.

"The master has touched me with his lips!"

"But—"

"*It is the kiss of death!*"

"My God!"

He remembered all now—what Callisa had told him the first time he visited the salon. In his blind love he had broken the law which spelled life or death for her.

"No—no!" he cried.

He stepped toward her again. But old

Gruba stood between them, one hand pointing toward the door.

"Callisa!" he cried. "I have murdered you!"

"Do not grieve, master!"

"You shall live! They shall kill me instead!"

"I must die, master!"

"I'll fight them to save you!"

"It is the law, master; I must die!"

Berkley reeled against the side of the salon.

"I shall die," said Callisa's voice. "I am content. I love you, master. You have kissed me. I shall die—but the kiss was worth its cost."

"Callisa!"

Her eyes were shining through the tears.

"Farewell, master!" she said. "Farewell!"

Gruba held open the door. He stumbled into the hallway and on to the deck. The last cry of Callisa rang in his ears.

There was love of which no man was worthy! She could die—and die content—for a kiss!

CHAPTER XI.

THE MARK OF THE HEART.

How Berkley gained the deck he never knew. His mind was seemingly stunned with the horror of it.

He kept whispering to himself that it was ridiculous—that no one could murder a beautiful girl simply because a man's lips had touched her. But down in his heart, remembering the air of mystery that surrounded everything, he dreaded the outcome.

He could only promise himself that he would do everything in his power to prevent such a catastrophe. By his unthinking act he had condemned her to death; it would be his duty to save her. He would die, if need be, in an attempt to rescue her.

When he reached the deck, Captain Stomble, Mr. Giles, and several of the crew were standing near the rail, gazing toward the southwest, where a purple haze near the horizon indicated land.

With Begley at his heels, Berkley made his way toward the captain. He had tried to conquer his emotions, to keep the

knowledge of what he had done from the captain if possible.

Perhaps old Gruba, the only witness, would refuse to speak, and thus save her young mistress.

"Sir," said Captain Stomble, "that land which you see is our destination. But for the vapors we would have sighted it some hours ago. Before long we shall be at anchor."

"An island?" Berkley asked.

"A large island, sir—one that is far more valuable than the majority in this part of the world. As yet it is uncharted, and it is likely that it never will be."

"You forget," said Berkley, "that it was once discovered, else you would not know of it. Why shouldn't it be discovered again?"

"Two or three times men from the outside world have happened to reach its shores. But they never leave," replied the captain, with deep insinuation.

"They were murdered?"

"Not without being given a chance to live," said the captain. "You will be able to learn much of the island's history when you arrive. History is not a study of the island, however; it is forbidden to talk of the past. Every one there lives for the present. But there is one man of rank who keeps the history, whose duty it is to record everything. No one sees the books but him. It is not for the people of the island, but for the world in case an end comes to the country. It is to be a record of an ideal existence."

"I will have access to these books?" Berkley inquired.

"It will be part of your duties to keep them," the captain answered. "Only one person in the island may have knowledge as the outside world looks upon it—and you are that man."

"I see," said Berkley.

The members of the crew were singing as they went about their duties. When Berkley had first seen them in the harbor of San Francisco they looked the same as any rough sailors to be found on small craft. Now, however, in spite of their uncouth appearance, their faces beamed.

Surely there was something in this land to make men pleased with life.

As soon as he could, Berkley left the deck and went to his cabin. He instructed

Begley to remain outside. Then, sitting before the tiny table, he gazed through the port-hole at the distant land. But he was thinking of Callisa.

He sat thus for some time, thinking of the matter. And he gathered courage. Surely there would be some way, he thought, in which he could save her.

But he knew it would be making matters worse to betray his sorrow. He would have to appear contented, smiling, as though willing to abide by the law of the land in all things, and watch for his chance.

Finally there came a rap at the door, and Begley entered.

"Will it please the master to eat?" he asked.

Berkley replied that it would. Soon the tiny table was cleared and the food placed upon it. It was by far the best meal he had enjoyed since boarding the Manatee. The food was good, the wine excellent, and when Berkley lit his cigar and motioned for Begley to remove the things, he indeed felt content.

As the servant started to leave the room, Berkley called after him.

"When you come back, Begley, enter; I wish to speak to you."

"Yes, master."

The man soon returned. He stood just inside the door, holding his cap in his hand.

"Begley," said Berkley, "are you pleased to serve me?"

"Yes, master."

"We are near the end of our journey. After we land, will you still serve me?"

"If I have not displeased you, master."

"I can have you, then, if I desire?"

"Yes, master."

"Begley," he went on, "you have pleased me greatly. I desire you to be with me always. Are you willing to serve me?"

"Oh, master!"

Begley was kneeling before him, his head bowed.

"Well?"

"It would be a great honor, master; I am not worthy!"

"I am the best judge of that. I say you are worthy. If you are willing, then, you shall serve me always."

"I am grateful to the master. I will serve him always, and faithfully. Never

will my eyes close in sleep while the master needs my services. I will die for you, master!"

"That is settled, then."

"I am your slave, master. My honor is greater than I deserve."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Berkley.

"Now, what must I do, Begley, to settle that you shall be my servant?"

"Master asks me to speak?"

"Surely!"

"Master has merely to order me to instruct the captain, who will report the matter. Then it will be done. Except—"

"Yes?"

"Master will, of course, put his mark upon me."

"What do you mean?"

"Being master's servant, I shall be a great man. I shall rank above all others, master, except one or two. But, to show that I am a servant in spite of my rank, master must brand me."

"How?"

"Master is entitled to select a certain mark, and anything which bears it is honored and protected by all. No one may use this mark but the master. When he selects his mark, he shall put it upon the right cheek of his servant first of all."

"What sort of a mark?" Berkley asked.

"Any sort, master—whatever you desire."

"I'll think about it, Begley; you may go now."

Begley retreated to the door, bowed low, and went out. Berkley had difficulty to keep from laughing.

"It seems serious enough with him," he said to himself.

He spent another hour watching through the port-hole and wondering what was in store for him.

The Manatee was approaching the land at a rapid rate. Berkley could see the verdure. But there was no sign of a city, no indication of a harbor.

As he watched, the course of the Manatee was changed and she started to run around the island. Soon Berkley could see a lagoon, coral-bound, which extended some distance out. A narrow line of breakers showed where the opening was.

On the far side of the lagoon was what looked like a small dock. Behind that, on the land, were several buildings and a

collection of huts. One wide avenue ran straight up from the water and disappeared into the forest. Here, Berkley supposed, was the landing.

He was growing interested, and went to stand by the port-hole to watch the scene better. But that was not satisfactory, and he determined to go on deck.

Begley was at the door when he opened it, and started to lead the way.

"Master will pardon," he said, "but my duty is no longer to follow, except when master orders it. It is now my duty to lead and clear the way for master."

"Lead away, then," replied Berkley.

Begley led the way to the deck. Here a surprise was in store for Berkley. The place had been transformed. Gay colors were everywhere. Streamers of gold flew from the masts and spars. Every rope was wrapped in colored cloth. Huge golden banners floated to the breeze. The deck was covered with a sort of carpet of thick cloth, and this, too, was gold in color. The ship looked golden from bow to stern.

Berkley gazed at it all in astonishment. Sailors aloft were putting the finishing touches to the decorations. Golden tapestries even hung over the sides of the vessel. The Manatee looked like a floating barge of honor.

Begley had stepped forward. Now he returned.

"The captain would like to know whether the master is pleased," he said.

"Tell him it could not be better."

Begley carried the message, and in a few minutes Captain Stomble came and knelt before Berkley.

"I am happy if the master is satisfied," he said. "I have done my best to satisfy him. Of course, we had no flowers, master, but as soon as we anchor there will be flowers in abundance; then the decorations will be completed."

"Isn't this enough?" Berkley asked.

"There is nothing too good for master. I do not want the people to think that Captain Stomble did not treat the master with the courtesies due his rank."

"Get up from your knees, Stomble," said Berkley. "I don't like this monkey business!"

"If master pleases."

The captain arose, and remained standing before Berkley.

"When you go forward, send Begley to me, will you?" Berkley asked.

"Pardon, master; I dare not issue orders to master's servant."

"What's that? I thought he was one of your sailors."

"He was, master. But now he is master's servant—he has said that master has chosen him—and he takes orders from no one except master and the king!"

"No wonder Begley was so infernally tickled," observed Berkley.

"Pardon, but the eyes of master's servant are on him at all times. Master has but to beckon."

Berkley looked up. Begley was half-way across the deck, but, as the captain had said, he was watching his master closely. Berkley beckoned; Begley rushed to his side.

"I am here, master," he said.

"Send some one to my cabin for my glass."

"Yes, master."

Begley ordered a sailor to go, then took up his position near Berkley.

Berkley walked to the rail and looked toward the land. The Manatee was making directly for the opening in the lagoon. It looked as though there was not room for her to pass. Captain Stomble was shouting orders; every member of the crew was on the alert.

They neared the breakers. The Manatee seemed to rise to the top of the water, then dash through the spray. Then she was upon the quiet surface of the lagoon, and the tumbling sea lay behind.

Berkley had gasped at this example of seamanship. He turned to express his appreciation to Captain Stomble, but the captain was still busy with the crew.

There was a series of orders, the ship slowed down, came to a stop, and with a rattling of chains the anchor slipped over, splashed into the water, and sank. The schooner was less than three hundred yards from the shore.

Berkley looked toward the little wharf. As he did, a large golden banner was flung from one of the buildings. Almost instantly a crowd of people came down the wide avenue from the forest. They were singing, and their arms were filled with flowers.

As Berkley watched, the little wharf was quickly covered with yellow cloth,

streamers burst out everywhere, and a flash of color met his eyes. On the pier, people were throwing flowers into the water.

When the sailor returned with the glass, Berkley took it from him and looked at the shore. The people were almost covered with flowers.

They were dark-skinned, the majority of them, evidently natives. But here and there was a man or a woman with a skin white and fair.

Berkley watched until he saw a boat put off. In it were several people, one man dressed in a flowing robe of yellow.

Berkley decided to go to his cabin, for he supposed this man was the one who was to instruct him in his duties. He told Begley to lead the way.

"By the way," he said, "what about that mark I am supposed to put on you?"

"Has the master selected it?"

"Let me see!"

Berkley went through his pockets. In one of them was his key-ring, holding half a dozen keys. The ring was in the shape of a heart.

Berkley took off the keys and showed the metal heart to Begley.

"This is my mark," he said.

"Will the master please to let me take it and depart for a few minutes?"

"Sure," replied Berkley.

As Begley left the room, Berkley turned to the port-hole to watch the approaching boat. When the latter almost reached the schooner, the door opened, and Begley reappeared. Berkley cried out in amazement when he saw him.

"What have you done?" he cried.

"I have put on the master's mark."

On his cheek was a perfect outline of the heart, branded into the flesh.

"Man," cried Berkley, "you needn't have done that!"

"It is the usual way," Begley answered. "The pain is as nothing, master, compared to the honor. I am master's slave now until death. I bear the mark of the heart!"

A tleman in the yellow robe had reached the deck. Still he remained in the cabin.

He heard noises that told him some ceremony was in progress. Finally some one knocked at the door.

In answer to his invitation to come in, Begley entered.

"Will the master please to admit the keeper of the ceremonies?" he asked.

Berkley moved his chair so that he could see the door and the port-hole at the same time.

"Let him come in," he said.

Begley stepped aside, and the keeper of the ceremonies entered.

He was an old man with a white beard. His shoulders were bent with the weight of years. His yellow robe hung on him loosely.

Berkley went on smoking his cigar, merely looking up as the keeper of the ceremonies entered. But when the man started to kneel, Berkley interrupted him.

"Arise!" he commanded.

"The master honors me," came the reply, in a weak voice. "I come from the king, to bid the master welcome to the Land of Lost Hope. If it is the pleasure of the master, I shall invest him immediately with the robes and duties of his office."

"Proceed," said Berkley.

The keeper of the ceremonies raised his hands aloft.

"There is no hope!" he cried.

Berkley answered him:

"There is life without hope!"

Evidently the keeper of the ceremonies was pleased at Berkley's immediate response.

"Is it permitted that I sit in the master's presence?" he asked. "Many years have weakened my limbs, master."

"Sit down," Berkley replied.

The old man sat down. He bent across the tiny table as he talked, and Berkley, looking out of the port-hole, listened.

"From this minute master will be known to all our people as the Kodar. It is a word of our language which means preserver of life and law.

"As kodar, master will wear the robes of the office. There will be but one greater than he, and that will be the king. The kodar will live in a palace set aside for him, which is near the pal-

CHAPTER XII.

IN ROBES OF STATE.

BERKLEY knew that the small boat had reached the schooner, and that the gen-

ace of the king. When he walks abroad the people will bow before him. Whatever he marks with his mark shall be protected always.

"To the kodar can come no harm. His word is law except when it conflicts with the laws of the land. The kodar is the court of last resort. He must enforce the law, even on the king!

"It is also his duty to be preserver of the body. He must keep sickness away from the people. He is furnished with a laboratory filled with drugs and those things which physicians need. They have been brought from a far country.

"The kodar takes part in a certain ceremony every morning. He says what people are fit of body to marry. He teaches at all times that it is sinful to hope, while it is virtuous to take the day's gifts as they come. He teaches that the past should not be remembered nor the future contemplated. But the kodar keeps a record of all things, and may read of the past. No eyes but those of the kodar may see these books. The last kodar, when he died, left them in a certain room, which has not been entered since.

"You will assume your position immediately, and I shall, for a time, tender you instructions—be with you constantly. In the morning you shall land and be conducted to the palace, to be received by the king.

"The king is an old man. He grows feeble. It shall be the duty of the kodar to preserve his health. The king has seven daughters. The eldest is the widow of the former kodar. The next three are teachers of ceremonies to the women, and may never take husbands. The fifth is very beautiful and accomplished. She is soon to be greatly honored, for she is to be master's wife!"

"*What!*" Berkley had sprung from his chair.

"The wedding will take place as soon as master is acquainted with his duties. It is the will of the king. The sixth daughter is also beautiful, but no husband has been selected for her. The seventh and youngest daughter, the master has seen."

"You mean—"

"Callisa!"

"She is the daughter of the king?"

"Yes, master; she was sent on board this ship, as a special honor to you."

Berkley was astounded. So Callisa was the king's daughter, and it was her sister who wanted to be his bride. Surely the daughter of the king would not be slain because a man's lips had touched hers.

"Tell me," said Berkley, "something I wish to know. Callisa told me one day, when I was talking to her, that if a man's lips should touch her, she would die."

"It is so, master."

"But why?"

"No one is allowed to love, because love fosters hope. Man is far the superior of woman. If a man kisses a maiden, it is because the maiden has made him love her, which is against the law. If a man kisses her, she has known love, and will therefore hope always; therefore, she must die."

"But suppose the man is to blame?"

"The man could not be to blame, master."

"Suppose Callisa herself was to be kissed by a man. Would the king let her die?"

"He would order it, master."

"His own daughter?"

"Even his own daughter!"

"It is monstrous!"

"It is the law, master!"

"Could not the kodar prevent the execution?"

"On the contrary, honored master, the kodar is the only one who would have power to administer death!"

"What?"

"The kodar is always the executor. He holds life and death in his hand. We have no strife; we evade trouble in all its forms. Were Callisa, or any other woman, condemned, she would be taken by the kodar to a certain place on the island, and no one would see her again."

"And this place?"

"It is sacred ground, where none but the kodar and condemned people can enter."

"Has any one ever been executed?"

"Pardon, master; we never speak of the past. When the kodar, I have said, takes the condemned away, no one sees her again, and she is forgotten."

The keeper of the ceremonies rattled

on, his head nodding as he related to Berkley the scope of the kodar's duties. But Berkley gave scant attention to his words.

In his mind was the one paramount fact—Callisa, even though she were a daughter of the king, was condemned to death, and he would be her executioner! It was his kiss that condemned her—it was the law that his should be the arm to lead her to death.

Finally the keeper of the ceremonies arose, and drew from beneath his robe a long and heavy chain of gold, upon the end of which was a small gold box, enscrolled with the device which Berkley had noticed in the salon.

The aged man advanced and threw the chain over Berkley's head, allowing the gold box to rest on his breast.

"I hail thee kodar!" he cried.

Berkley found that the box would open.

"You will have a certain brand," the keeper of the ceremonies explained, "which shall be your mark. The box is for the brand."

"I have already selected my mark. My servant wears it!"

He called Begley and requested the key-ring. Begley gave it to him, and he put it in the box and snapped the lid shut. The old man went to the door and returned with a package.

"It is your robes, illustrious kodar," he said. "You will assume them as soon as I have taken my leave. To-morrow morning early I shall come again to the ship to say that all is ready to receive the master. Then, when the master so disposes, he shall land and be honored."

The keeper of the ceremonies backed to the door and raised his right hand.

"There is no hope!" he cried.

"There is life without hope," answered Berkley.

Then he found himself alone with Begley.

The servant watched the master for a moment, then advanced and held out the package.

"Shall I open it, master?" he asked.

"Yes—open it. Let's see what my robes look like."

Begley tore the package open.

The robe was golden in color and made of silk. On the bosom was a device woven in gold braid. Around the

hem was a wide strip, half purple and half white.

"It is the mark of master's rank," Begley explained. "The robes of the king have a wide purple strip, master."

Berkley got into the robes and looked at himself in the mirror fastened to one of the cabin walls.

"This isn't so bad," he mused. "I look like an ancient Roman senator. Begley, inform the ladies that the kodar will soon call upon them."

"I go, master!"

Berkley followed slowly. He wanted Begley to have time to make the proper announcement. He told himself with a chuckle that this was his first visit in his new professional capacity.

When he reached the salon, he met Begley coming away from the door.

"They are ready to welcome you, master," he said.

Berkley opened the door and went in. Callisa was kneeling before the couch, old Gruba still haunted her particular corner.

"All hail the kodar!" Callisa muttered.

Berkley walked over and lifted her to his feet, bidding her be seated.

"I cannot sit in your presence now, master," she said.

"I wasn't sure I'd get in your presence," he rejoined. "The last time old Gruba almost threw me out of the salon."

"But now you are the kodar," she replied.

"And I've a little more to say about it now?"

"Your word is law, master."

"Then I can save you from death."

"No, master; there is a law greater than even the commands of master, and that law says I must die."

"How must you die?"

"I do not know. Master will attend to that."

The girl spoke in a low tone, and Berkley was almost overcome at the horror of the thought.

"I'll save you, Callisa, when the time comes," he said. "If it is forbidden you to hope, let me hope for you! Do not grieve, for I'll save you in some way!"

"I do not grieve, master, no matter what happens."

"When do you land?"

"Late this evening, master, or at sunrise."

"You live in your father's palace?"

"Yes, master, with the women."

"I shall see you there."

"It will not be permitted."

"Will they harm you, Callisa?"

"No one will harm me, master, until the time for death comes. No one dares touch me, except the kodar."

"But I am the kodar; suppose I refuse to execute you?"

"Such a thing is never heard of, master. You could not refuse."

"Do not despair, Callisa. I'll find a way to save you. Just trust me."

He turned and started to walk to the door. When he stopped, Callisa had followed him, and was kneeling and pressing her lips to the hem of his robe. He lifted her from the floor.

"Not that, Callisa," he said.

On deck there was a sudden burst of cheers. Berkley listened, holding the girl close to him.

"The king! The king!" cried the members of the crew.

"What does it mean?" Berkley asked.

"The king is coming," said Callisa.

"But I thought—"

"It is very unusual, master," she interrupted. "There must be some reason."

"Perhaps he is anxious to see his daughter."

"Master does not understand," said the girl slowly. "The king's daughters are as nothing to him!"

Begley knocked on the door. Berkley threw it open.

"Master, the king is coming!"

"What about it?" demanded Berkley.

"Something must have happened, master. Will you not come on deck to receive him?"

"I'll be there quickly, Begley."

He closed the door again, and turned to Callisa.

"No one but old Gruba saw the kiss of death," he said. "Will she speak?"

"She will tell all, master."

"Will nothing cause her to hold her tongue?"

"Nothing, master; she will tell the king!"

On deck came the cries again.

"The king! The king!"

"I must go at once," Berkley said.

"Have courage, Callisa; you shall be saved!"

He left her and went on deck.

CHAPTER XIII.

BRANDED BY THE KODAR.

WHEN Berkley reached the deck the king was already there. Captain Stomble, Mr. Giles, and the members of the crew were kneeling before him, and in a language Berkley did not understand, the king was speaking to them.

The keeper of the ceremonies was on hand, too; and when he saw Berkley, he made his way quickly toward him.

"His majesty is anxious to see you," the keeper of the ceremonies whispered, "and has done you the great honor to come aboard the ship. When he turns toward you, advance a few paces and kneel before him. I will be near and whisper other directions."

And so, when the king concluded his talk to the crew and turned around, Berkley walked forward a short distance and knelt, without speaking.

"I greet thee, kodar," said the king. "Arise, and clasp me by the hand."

Berkley arose and took the king's hand. His majesty was indeed an old man, his steps feeble, his face a wrinkled ghost of what it had once been.

But his eyes were bright and clear, and the physician knew, by looking at him, that, unless in the clutch of some hidden malady, the king would live for years.

"It gives me great pleasure to greet your majesty," Berkley said.

"I have looked at you, and I am satisfied," was the king's reply. "I trust much glory will come to our country through you."

Begley had brought chairs, and some of the sailors had spread an awning quickly. Now the king led Berkley to the chairs, and they sat down. His majesty motioned for every one to retreat out of hearing.

"Your voyage has been pleasant?" he asked.

"Quite so, your majesty. Captain Stomble and his men have done everything to make me comfortable."

"You have met my daughter, Callisa?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"Has her music pleased you?"

"It has, your majesty."

"It is well. I sent her on this expedition that she might make your hours full of contentment."

"She has done that, your majesty."

Berkley hesitated a moment, then added:

"I love her!"

"As you will love all our subjects, I trust."

"I do not mean that, your majesty. I love her as a man loves the woman he would make his wife."

"It is another of my daughters who is to be your wife," said the king.

"Cannot I choose, your majesty?"

"It would not be according to the laws of our land."

"Her name is—?"

"Bretina. She is beautiful and accomplished. She will make you a good wife."

"Cannot your majesty understand that love is essential to a perfect union?"

"In other countries, perhaps; not in ours."

"And I must marry Bretina?"

"Certainly, kodar!"

"If I refuse—?"

The king glanced at him quickly.

"You have worldly wisdom, kodar; you will not refuse," he said.

"But if I should?"

"You will not refuse, kodar!"

There was no mistaking the king's tone. It meant that there was an end of that subject.

"I have told you, your majesty, that I love Callisa. Cannot it be arranged that I take her for my wife, instead of Bretina?"

"No, kodar. We will not speak of this further."

Berkley's anger conquered his judgment.

"Your majesty," he said, "your men came and took me away from what was my world. I submitted because I could not resist. I am willing to serve you well and be content, if you give me the woman I love."

"Kodar," replied the other, "when you understand the foundation principles of our laws, you will see why it cannot be done. You want Callisa, do you not?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"That is the reason why you should not have her. It is the first lesson for you

in our country's laws. Ours is the Land of Lost Hope!"

"I understand," replied Berkley.

While the king talked of other things, Berkley was thinking. Her father might change his mind if he knew that Callisa had received the kiss of death. Rather than see his daughter die, the king might give her to Berkley, and hush the voice of old Gruba, so that no one else would know what had occurred.

"Your majesty!" said Berkley.

"Yes, kodar."

"I have something for your ears alone."

"Speak, kodar; none other may hear."

"Your daughter, Callisa, has felt my lips against hers!"

The king seemed to stiffen in his chair, and for a moment he looked straight ahead at the open sea. Then, after a time, a change came over his face, which expressed mingled sorrow and determination.

"When, kodar?"

"Not long since."

"She must die!" said the king.

"But she is your flesh and blood."

"She has broken the law; she must die!"

"It was not she who broke it. I kissed her, your majesty. She could not help it!"

"She gave you reason, else you would not have kissed her!"

"But she was trying only to make the long hours pass. Your majesty ordered her to sing for me, play for me."

"Excuses do not count; she must die!"

"When, your majesty?"

"That is not for me to say. You are the kodar, and therefore you are the executioner!"

"Then I may delay the execution?"

"She must die before seven suns have risen!"

"And I must slay her?"

"No! You but conduct her to her death! In our land there is no strife. No man's hands are red with the blood of other men. We have a place of execution which no one sees except the kodar. My father visited it once, and since that time it has been forbidden that even the king should go there. I have never seen it. No one sees it except the kodar."

"What is this place?"

"It is called the Pool of Sharks! It is half a mile in diameter, and enclosed by a high stone wall—a natural wall of volcanic origin. There is but one entrance—a small passageway in the stone. It is guarded always. The kodar takes the condemned in there, and the condemned never comes out!"

"But what manner of death—"

"You will find that out, kodar, when you escort Callisa there."

"You would not save your own daughter?"

"She has broken the law; the law is greater than the king!"

"Yet you will grieve?"

"Yes; but the law must be obeyed!"

"Would you like to see your daughter now, your majesty?"

"I will see her here and now, and bid her farewell. Pass the order, kodar!"

Berkley called Begley, and told him to escort Callisa to the deck, that the king wished to see her.

"Your majesty," he resumed, turning to the king again, "why is it you slay her and honor me? Were we not both guilty?"

"The kodar could not be guilty of such an offense. Our law says it is the woman who must die!"

"It is unjust, your majesty—infamous! It was my kiss that condemned her to death! You order me to be executioner! Think, your majesty! She is flesh of your flesh—"

"She is an outcast who has broken the law. Say no more, kodar!"

The king's words were a command.

Berkley sat in silence, waiting. Finally, Begley came back, and Callisa was behind him. Old Gruba came also.

Begley and the two women knelt before the king and the kodar. They were told to arise. Begley went away again, to take up his position behind Berkley. Callisa and the old woman remained standing several feet away.

The king was looking at his daughter with affection in his eyes. Perhaps, Berkley thought, he might relent.

"Is all well with you, daughter?" he asked.

Callisa replied in that unknown tongue which had puzzled Berkley.

"Speak English until the kodar learns our language!" the king commanded.

"All things are for the ears of the kodar!"

"I am glad to be home again, father."

"You have kept our laws?"

Callisa hung her head.

"Speak!" the king commanded.

"I have broken them, my father!"

"How?"

"A man's lips have touched me."

The king looked at Gruba.

"Is this true?" he asked.

The old woman made a sign of assent.

"The punishment is death!" said the king slowly.

"I know, father."

"You shall die!"

"I am ready, father!"

"Do you not fear death?"

"No, my father. It comes as the price of much happiness."

"What happiness?"

"I have loved, my father!"

"And you are content to die because you have loved?"

"Yes, father. For even in the hour of death the one I love shall be with me. He shall be my executioner. It is so written. My last look shall be at him, my last words spoken for him. Death cannot be so very terrible, my father, when love is there."

The king had half risen from his chair while she spoke. Now his face was red with anger.

"Stop!" he commanded. "You are breaking laws and laws. You speak of happiness, of hope! Even in death you see hope! Outcast! What have you done with your mind? What has become of your teachings? Can the love of a moment overthrow the teachings of years?"

"Aye, my father, the love of a second can do so!"

"In the hour of death perhaps you will change! You are child of mine no longer! From now until you are led to execution you shall be degraded and treated as the lowest of the land. You are entitled to live in luxury until the kodar calls you to death! But this privilege I take from you!"

"From now until the hour of death you shall have no food, no place of shelter. You shall be outcast in every meaning. The men in the streets shall scourge you with their whips, the lowest women speak to you, thereby insulting you! You

shall live your last days as the dogs live! Then let the people say, if they can, that the king does not uphold the laws, even against those of his own household!"

The king's rage was terrible to see. Callisa had fallen upon the deck, moaning. This promised disgrace was worse than death.

She, a princess, to be a low outcast, scourged by men, spoken to by women of no standing!

As the king heaped curses upon his daughter's head, Berkley began to hate him. He turned quickly to Begley, opened the gold box, took out his brand, and gave it to Begley with some whispered instructions. Begley went away, and soon returned with a small alcohol-lamp in his hand, from which the flame was spouting. He was holding the brand in the flame.

"An outcast!" cried the king. "Your fair flesh, which has never been wounded, shall be cut to strips by vagabonds! Your beautiful hair shall be torn! The cheeks in which you take such pride shall grow hollow from hunger, your garments shall be filthy with the earth upon which you shall sleep. And on the day of your exe-

cution men and women shall jeer you—you, a daughter of the king!

"Violent hands shall be placed upon you! It needs but the first blow from mine to lower you in the estimation of all our people. And now I shall give it!"

The king arose and stepped toward her, his hand uplifted.

But Berkley, turning quickly to Begley, and taking the brand from him, was before the king. He went down on the deck by Callisa's side! More quickly still he threw back the robe from her left arm and, before the king could reach her, the red-hot brand had been swung through the air and placed against the fair skin.

There was a sickening odor, a cry of pain from Callisa, who tried to get to her feet!

The king recoiled, consternation in his face. Berkley arose quickly and faced them all, holding the brand on high.

"Let no one dare touch her!" he cried.

"Kodar!" It was the king who spoke.

"Let no one dare touch her, else he breaks the law! *She bears the mark of the kodar!*"

(To be continued.)

RIVALS IN LOVE.

By SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

What was really happening to Calister when he was supposed to be drowned, and how Biggles profited not, after all.

EVERYBODY in Dinmore knew of the rivalry between Calister and Biggles, and everybody gathered great enjoyment from the same. For, so far as Ena Davison was concerned, they seemed to be running about neck and neck most of the time, with an occasional spurt of advantage for Calister, and then again a sudden forge ahead in the race by Biggles.

The calmest and least concerned seemed to be Miss Davison herself. For be it known, Miss Davison was something of a flirt, and her father quite a big gun for Dinmore.

And the rivalry between Calister and

Biggles was no mean affair. While they were in ordinary matters pretty good friends, or at least had never come to blows, pistol fights, or anything worse than angry words, they would not hesitate to resort to the most reprehensible tricks to defeat each other.

Thus, if Calister had purchased seats for the theater and, as was his custom, given the tickets into the keeping of Miss Davison to be cared for till the evening of the theater engagement, he would be called away by a telegram stating that his rich uncle in Swampville was dying. And, lest he lose his inheritance, Calister would hasten to Swampville, only to find

his uncle in the most heartless condition of good health, and Biggles would escort Miss Davison to the theater on Calister's tickets.

Or, if Biggles had made an engagement with Miss Davison to drive her to her cousin's in Barson on the first bright evening, when the bright evening arrived his horse had lost a couple of shoes and Calister had a new trotter that needed trying.

It was a standing question in Dinmore what the rivals would think of next. For they were all young and Mr. Davison was perfectly willing to have the merry war go on, meanwhile giving his daughter time to grow wiser and marry somebody with more sense than either of them.

But the wisest of the wise in Dinmore knew that sooner or later the cruel war must cease. The critical battle would be fought. And Miss Davison would become the wife of either Calister or Biggles.

The young men stood about equal in the estimation of Dinmore, and the only deep feeling the inhabitants felt was the regret that when this came to pass much of the sunlight of life would depart from Dinmore. They would lose all the fun.

There were frequent repetitions of the old adage that all is fair in love or war, and the two combatants worked on this theory.

Matters were about even when one morning Dinmore woke up to learn with horror and regret that Calister was drowned.

And the manner of his drowning was as follows: Calister had a small cat-boat in which he frequently took Miss Davison sailing on the Hudson River, or went fishing himself, and he had made an engagement one afternoon to take the young lady for a sail.

But Biggles, with that unscrupulous cunning that kept the merry war about even, cut some rope, told Miss Davison that the boat was unsafe, and took Miss Davison out in a gasoline launch.

Calister was angry, of course. But he had nothing to do for the afternoon, and he owned a little dory. So, fetching his rod and tackle from the boat-house, he set his teeth, resolving to get even with Miss Davison, and went fishing.

Calister knew all the good fishing-grounds, and rowed a long distance down the river and began.

He had pretty good luck, and while he was pulling away toward Dinmore again a log got in the way of his dory, she slid her nose up in the air and turned turtle, leaving Calister flopping in the water.

Calister, notwithstanding his boating propensities, was a poor swimmer, like some sailors. He made no effort to right the boat nor cling to it. He managed to flounder to shore. And it so happened that he reached the opposite shore from Dinmore.

This was a matter of minor importance, as Calister had money in his pocket, and time amounted to little. But he was soaked, and the wind had come up chill.

He was very uncomfortable. There was not a house in sight. There was, however, a row of freight-cars on a siding. The sun was shining with a sort of chilly brightness, and in the sun and dry air Calister knew his clothes would soon dry.

So he peeled them off, put them over some rocks along shore, and then crawled into an empty freight-car to keep out of the wind.

His rough experience in the water, and the fact that he had been up all night at a ball, made Calister sleepy. There was hay in the car, and burrowing into it Calister lay down and unfortunately went to sleep.

Alas for that fatal sleep! It was not fatal so far as catching cold and dying of pneumonia was concerned; Calister wasn't that kind.

But when Calister did awake from that sleep he found it was growing dusk, and—there was no Hudson River in sight.

A queer sensation that he was dreaming came over Calister, and he rubbed his eyes, stared out of the car-door on the side he knew the river had been, and saw a stretch of beautiful farm lands that would have pleased him at any other time.

But Calister was not in the mood now to enjoy rustic vistas, and in great distress of mind hurried to look on the other side. Here he saw woods.

At first he thought of Biggles. It would be just like Biggles to discover

him in that freight-car and steal the car. But he remembered that there had been cars before and behind the one he was in. It was scarcely possible that Biggles could steal a large percentage of the rolling-stock of a railroad and bring one car to that spot, wherever it was.

There was nothing familiar in the scene. There was not a house to be seen. Yet Calister discovered that once more the car was on a siding, and, sticking his head out of the door and looking up the track, he saw a little station.

There was only one other track visible. Then the truth dawned on Calister. While he had been sleeping soundly the empty cars had been picked up by a locomotive, and this one had been hauled out to some miserable little country station and left there to be loaded with farm produce, animals, milk, or something.

To make any attempt to picture the feelings of Calister would exhaust the historian so that he would be unable to record what happened next.

Calister was cold. Goose pimples made his skin feel like something to scratch matches on. He shivered with the cold.

Moreover, he was hungry.

At first he thought he'd make the best of it and wait for some one to come. But whoever came wouldn't be likely to carry with him a suit of clothes and some food.

It would presently be night now, and the thought of spending it alone in that freight-car had no charms for Calister.

The more he thought about the matter the more he considered it his best policy to start out in search of a man or boy who could help him out of his dilemma.

There was a road running alongside the track to the station. There might be somebody at the station, and Calister knew that country station-agents as a rule were men.

So, taking a last look around to make sure there was no undesirable female lurking in the evening shadows, he let himself down from the car and made his way to the station. It was locked as securely as the United States Treasury.

Much disappointed, Calister began to think again. If he only had some sort of clothing, he would not hesitate to tackle the highway and tramp till he met somebody or reached a house. But where was he to get clothing?

Hunting around, he found some meal-sacks. There were three of these, and with great ingenuity, aided with some string he found on the station platform, Calister made himself a suit of clothes.

It was neither the most comfortable nor the most becoming suit he had ever worn, but he had never known the time when he had needed clothes worse, and he could not afford to be fastidious.

With his bare feet and bare arms sticking out of his absurd outfit, he started more boldly along the road. Even now he shrank from meeting anybody who would laugh at his dilemma. And as for meeting females—Calister was a very modest man.

He trudged along, sometimes gritting his teeth with rage, when the lights of a farmhouse attracted his attention. Now, it was manifestly not the thing for a man of Calister's modest nature and his present garb to run the risk of marching up to the door of a farmhouse and perhaps being greeted by half a dozen people. If he could find a solitary hired man the situation would be much simpler.

He resolved to reconnoiter a little. To this end, instead of going on to the main gate, he turned into what seemed to be a cow-lane leading somewhere up among the buildings he saw some distance away.

The lights in the windows were extremely alluring, and Calister wished the hired man would hurry up and be found, so that he could ask for food.

Calister had about given up hope when he heard a bark and a growl. And then to his consternation he saw coming toward him from the direction of the house an animal. It sounded like a dog, but to the excited imagination of Calister it looked like a galloping elephant.

Inspired by terror, Calister turned and ran the other way.

Running was easy so far as the looseness of his garment was concerned, but he was not accustomed to running across-country in bare feet. And judging from the sounds the huge beast that barked like a dog seemed to be gaining.

The direction Calister had taken by chance led him toward a small barn. As he drew near it he was rejoiced to see what appeared to be, and proved to be, a ladder leaning against the front.

He knew dogs couldn't climb ladders, and reaching up as high as he could he climbed. At the top of the ladder there was a small, open door. It led to the hay-loft, which was only partly filled.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Calister, as he flung himself down on the hay.

Instantly there was a loud howl, a muttered curse, and something big like a man rushed past him and out through the door. And Calister heard the ladder fall, and then looking out, saw a combat between the dog and a tramp who had been terrified at the appearance of Calister, for tramps were severely dealt with in that region.

"Well, anyhow, I'm safe till I can make somebody hear," Calister said to himself. "The dog's got enough to do."

But the tramp had been enjoying a smoke, which no well-conducted tramp ever does in a man's hay-loft, and in his terror at the thought of being captured and spending thirty days in the lockup he had flung away his pipe. And in less time than it takes to tell it the hay was on fire.

With his bare hands Calister tried to extinguish the flames, but this was old hay and burned like powder. And to make matters worse the dry sacking which Calister wore got on fire and he had to tear it off.

The ladder was down, but he heard shouts and saw two men running toward him. The dog was on the ground barking, but the tramp was gone.

"The ladder! The ladder!" yelled Calister. "I'll burn to death!"

"Sarve ye right, ye scoundrel," growled one of the men. "I've got a good notion to let ye burn. Nobody'd ever know."

"I didn't do it," said Calister. "Quick! The ladder. I'll explain."

The ladder was raised, and hot, scorched in places, poor Calister reached the ground.

"What the blazes!" cried the other man. "He ain't got no clothes on."

"Ye blamed tramp!" added the older man. "What do ye mean by climbin' up in my hay-loft and settin' it on fire?"

"I'm no tramp," said Calister, getting as far away from the blazing barn as possible. "There was a tramp up there. I scared him out."

"That's a likely story," rejoined the younger man. "I s'pose you're a constable and go around nights huntin' tramps without clothes, eh? Oh, yes. We believe that. Better give him a durn good thrashin', eh, pop?"

"A kick or two wouldn't do no harm," said the old man. "I'd like to pitchfork him. Two or three tons of old hay in there, and the barn—all gone."

"Well, it's insured."

"Sure. Now, what'll we do with this tramp? 'Tain't no use ter take the law in our own hands. An' he's got ter have clothes. We can't take him this way."

"Where's your clothes?" asked the younger man.

"I left them on the bank of the Hudson River opposite Dinmore. I don't know what this place is called."

"Left 'em *where*?"

"I'll tell you. I was fishing and my boat tipped over. I got to shore, took off my clothes to dry them, and got into a freight-car. I went to sleep, and I suppose the car was hauled here."

"Well, by gum! I've heard 'em tell good ones. I've heard them tramps tell yarns that'd make people believe 'em. But this takes the cake. I'll tell ye what ye did. Ye climbed up in that loft. I s'pose ye'd been washing yer clothes in the creek, an' had 'em dryin'. An' ye sat up there outen the way, smokin'. Well, come along. It'll be the last smoke ye'll take in some time."

"I tell you I did not set the place on fire. I was going to your house when the dog came after me."

"That'll do. That'll do. Come along."

The miserable old shack had burned down and there was no danger of anything else being set on fire. Calister found himself in the grip of an iron hand, and marched between the two obdurate farmers toward the house.

"I'll keep him in the wood-shed, Thomas, while you git some clothes. Needn't be partikler. Anything'll do."

Calister tried to reason with the old farmer, but he might just as well have talked to a stone.

The rough clothing was brought and Calister put it on.

"Now we'll fix ye," said the farmer. "Git the hoss, Thomas."

Calister knew there was no use remonstrating. Everything was against him. And he hoped that wherever they intended to take him he would find more intelligent men.

He was soon in the wagon, sitting with Thomas on the back seat, and the old man drove off.

And now the thoughts of Calister were lively. He did not know what was before him, but surmised that he was being taken to the lockup.

If he tried to make them believe that he was not a tramp he must give a name. And Calister's soul shrank from having it known in Dinmore that he had been caught in any such plight. And then a laugh of unholy glee went through him as he thought of Biggles.

What grand sport all Dinmore would have when, after he was set free, he got a few copies of the country paper with an article how James Biggles, of Dinmore, had been caught without any clothes on in a farmer's hay-loft and arrested as a common tramp. It was almost good enough to pay Calister for the discomfort he had gone through.

The constable lived in a small house, and the lockup was even smaller. The place was a thinly settled region which still adhered to the rules that are in force in several counties still, by which the constable makes his fees by arresting tramps, feeding them at his expense, and charging the county for the same, adding enough to make a profit.

The constable was about the same hard-crusted kind as the farmer. He had just finished supper and was smoking his pipe.

"How do, Silas?" was his greeting. "Glad to see you."

"I've brought ye a present," said Silas. "I want this feller locked up. He's a tramp."

"Is, eh? Well, I reckon we kin take care of him."

"He was in my little old hay-barn—you know the one—and set fire to it. Even burned up his own clothes. Them's a old suit of Thomas's he's got on."

"I'm not a tramp," protested Calister. "I am a gentleman. I am well known along the Hudson. I explained to these men what happened and they refused to believe me. I'll tell you the

same thing. My name is James Biggles. I live in Dinmore."

"Well, that kin be seen to afterward. You'll stay here to-night."

The small lockup under the jurisdiction of that constable was no mean affair notwithstanding its size. It was strongly built.

When Calister heard the heavy door slam and lock behind him he fumed with impotent rage.

To think that he, Harry Calister, a gentleman who had never committed any greater sin than to play mean tricks on Biggles to win a girl, should be incarcerated in a little country jail because he had met with a peculiar misfortune! Something had happened to him that might never happen again in the world.

He fumed, he raged. He poked round the lockup trying to find a way of escape. It was useless. The lock of the door was strong. The window was heavily barred. He tried his strength on the grating, but a giant could not have moved it.

Calister cursed, although his speech was usually pure enough. He walked the floor till he was exhausted. Then he flung himself down on the bunk and tried to sleep. The moment he became prostrate the nervous rage impelled him to get up and walk some more.

And so morning came. And with it came his breakfast and the constable.

"What's this you said your name was?" asked the constable.

A great wave of hatred toward Biggles swelled up and overwhelmed him.

"My name," he said viciously, "is James Biggles. I live at Dinmore, on the Hudson. Telegraph there and you'll learn. Telegraph to the postmaster."

Calister knew what he was doing. Biggles had an office in New York, and left Dinmore usually on an early train. By the time the constable could get a telegram to Dinmore, Biggles would be gone.

"Postmaster at Dinmore, eh?" asked the constable.

"Yes. I leave Dinmore every morning very early, so my absence will not be missed. Ask if I am known there."

"I'll do it," said the constable.

He drove away. In the little railroad station he sent this telegram:

POSTMASTER, DINMORE:

Tramp arrested here claims to be James Biggles, of Dinmore.

HIRAM HATCHES, Constable.

And in due time the reply came back:

HATCHES, Constable:

Impossible. James Biggles has not been away from Dinmore to-day, and is with me this minute.

"Here, you!" cried the constable when he returned to the lockup. "You lied to me, you did. You'll get all I can give you now. James Biggles hain't left Dinmore this morning. Read this."

Calister read.

"Now," said the constable, "it don't make no difference what yer name is. Tramps have a good many names and none of 'em true. We'll fix you, Mr. Tramp. Ye won't come round these diggin's any more."

And they started in to fix poor Calister.

He had the hardest bed that could be devised. His food was meager and poor. The poorer the fare Calister got the more profit there was in it for the constable.

Calister fumed and swore, but to no purpose. The constable wouldn't listen to him.

And then one day the little slot in the door opened and a sweet voice said:

"Here's your dinner."

Calister peered out and saw a pretty girl.

His heart leaped within him. She looked sweet and gentle and generous.

"Are you the constable's daughter?" asked Calister.

"Yes," she said, eying him through the slot.

"Will you listen to me a moment? I am really not a tramp. You look so pretty I am sure you will do me a favor."

"Why—I ought not to. And you *are* a tramp, you know. You gave a gentleman's name."

"He's a friend of mine. Listen to my confession," Calister went on pleadingly. "In Dinmore there is a pretty girl named Ena Davison. This Biggles and I are friends, but we are both trying to get Ena. Biggles and I play all sorts of tricks on each other to gain what advantage we can. I half suspect that he man-

aged to have me run away with by that car. You know the story, don't you?"

"Yes," she said.

Her face turned a little red and she laughed.

"And so I gave his name instead of my own. My name is really Harry Calister. Now, what I would like is for some one to know about this and come here and identify me. Will you please write to—let me see—one pretty woman can always win another pretty woman. Please write to Ena Davison about me and ask her not to tell. I don't know who else to tell you to write to. Will you do that?"

"Ye—es," she said slowly. "That can't do any harm. I'll do it. But don't tell my father."

That very day she wrote. And the next afternoon a young man extremely well dressed stepped jauntily from the train and inquired where Constable Hatches lived.

He hired a boy to drive him to the constable's. The constable had returned from the trip that had made it necessary for the girl to feed the prisoner.

"I understand, sir, that you have a prisoner who claims to be James Biggles."

"Yes, sir."

"Here is my card. I am James Biggles."

The face of young Mr. Biggles had now become gloomy. The constable was about leading him to the lockup when the girl, who had heard the conversation, stepped up.

"Papa," she said, "yesterday the tramp told me his real name was Harry Calister."

"What's that?" asked Biggles with a start. His face was gloomier than ever. "Let me see this man with several names."

They walked to the door of the lockup. The constable threw it open.

"Biggles!" cried Calister, rushing forward.

Biggles froze.

"This man has lied twice," he said to the constable. "He is not James Biggles, for I am James Biggles. He is not Harry Calister, for Harry Calister was drowned in the Hudson four days ago. I was out in my launch, when I chanced

to go ashore for bait. I found some clothes on some rocks and recognized them as Calister's. I knew the poor fellow well. I searched and found his boat overturned and floating down stream. This fellow—I never saw before."

Calister turned purple. The constable looked at the calm, gloomy face of Biggles.

"Jim, don't forsake me!" wailed Calister. "I'll never play a trick on you again."

Biggles was walking away. The constable, puzzled, looked first at Biggles and then at Calister.

"By gum!" he cried as he leaped at Biggles and hurled that astonished gentleman into the pen with Calister. "I think I've got a brace o' crooks that work together, that's what I think. You'll both stay there now till I know more."

The lockup door was slammed and the two rivals in love were left together.

"You're a fine one!" growled Calister. "You might have let me out."

"What did you get in for, you fool?" demanded Biggles hotly. "Now I'm in a fine fix. And I've got to take Ena to a party to-morrow night."

They quarreled and wrangled, but the door of the lockup was just as strong for two as for one and there they remained.

And the constable got busy. He had visions of rewards for the important capture. He was in no hurry. He was getting paid for keeping them, but he wanted information.

He telegraphed to the police at Dinmore:

Two men claiming to be Harry Calister and James Biggles locked up here. What do you know about them?

And then the constable waited. He waited with some degree of patience, but the two young men in the lockup waited with a furious desire to get out and away.

Another weary day passed. And then a tall, well-dressed man left the train at the little station. He also asked where the constable lived. He also hired a boy to drive him there. To the constable he said:

"My name is Davison. I live in Dinmore. I would like to see the two prisoners called Calister and Biggles."

"Certainly, sir."

"I have a letter from the chief of police of Dinmore."

"I'll take it, sir."

The letter satisfied the constable. Again the door of the lockup was opened.

"Mr. Davison!" cried both prisoners.

"Yes," said Mr. Davison sternly. "Constable, that one is Calister, and that one is Biggles. Now I'd like an explanation of all this. There is some devilment about it. Which one of you knows where Ena has gone?"

"Ena? Gone?"

"Yes, gone. She left a letter saying she was going away with a man she loved, but she did not give his name. There are three young men missing. You, Calister, and you, Biggles, and Ed Croony."

"Ed Croony! The son of the big brickmaker?"

"Yes."

"He's missing, too?" gasped Biggles.

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know anything about Ena," said Calister.

"Nor I," added Biggles sadly.

"M. Then it must be Croony," mused Mr. Davison slowly.

"It must be Croony. Well, he isn't so bad. I like him pretty well."

"Biggles," said Calister, "the war is over. We might as well be friends."

"We might as well," rejoined Calister sadly. "It's the only thing to do."

So the three sad men went home together. And then Dinmore had its last big laugh.

PROOF POSITIVE.

THE lovely hair my Celia wears is hers,
Who would have thought it?
She swears 'tis hers, and true she swears,
For I know where she bought it.

WITH SEALED LIPS.*

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "On Glory's Trail," "Their Last Hope," "The Scarlet Scarab," etc.

A story of the sixties in which an army officer obtains leave of absence from the President and finds himself in worse case than any that the war thrust upon him.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

GUY BRUCE, a captain in the Union Army, goes to London for the purpose of wresting from O'Hara Bradway, the London partner of his father's banking-house, three drafts forged by his cousin, Stephen Kent. On the steamer, where he is known as Brian Meagher, he falls in love with Ruth Osborne, who turns out to be Bradway's niece. After arrival on the other side he is invited by Bradway to a dinner-party which proves to be a meeting of some political society. Bruce succeeds, however, in getting possession of the drafts and in mailing them to his father by a clever ruse, but is involved in an imbroglio with Bradway, who contrives to have him sent under a nine years' sentence to the penal settlement of Duladgin in Australia, where, twelve months later, Stephen Kent is appointed warden. Here, in due course, Bradway also turns up as prison governor, bringing Ruth with him, who makes no secret of her preference for Bruce, convict though he be.

Kent and Bradway plot to kill him, but he has a friend in a fellow prisoner, Kate, acting as house-servant to the warden. She it is who starts the rumor of gold being discovered near by, which causes most of the guards to desert, and in a terrific battle the convicts overpower the few that remain on duty. Meanwhile Bruce fights a fierce duel with Kent, whom he leaves for dead, and while the escaped prisoners are riotously celebrating their victory, he prepares to depart for the coast. But suddenly Kate hurries up to him in a panic of terror.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FLIGHT.

"WHEN I went out of here a few minutes ago," Kate proceeded, "I crossed over to the cell-house. I kind of wanted that skirt—the one I threw over Kent. If it was a souvenir before, it ought to be a *relic* now."

"Well, where is it? Didn't you find it?"

"Yes," she faltered, "I found it. It was still lying there. And there I left it. For—for Kent's *gone!*"

"Gone!" I echoed, doubting my own ears.

"Yes. The man I saw lying dead, not seven hours ago. He's got up and—and—*gone!*"

I looked at the girl more closely. There was no doubt whatever as to the genuineness of her emotion, yet it was this very emotion that led me to doubt the truth of what she had just told me.

We had left Kent lying where he fell, near the entrance of the cell-house, a full two hundred yards from the plaza, and far out of the path of ordinary travel.

The cell-house contained nothing of value, and the convicts knew it. Nor had there been any captive except myself incarcerated in it at the time. So none of the new masters of the place would have been likely to visit the spot in the course of their search for plunder.

Besides, the angle of the low cell-house roof cut off from the fire's glare the spot where Kent had lain. It was not probable that the convicts had noted his whereabouts.

Had they seized upon the body there must have been some turmoil and quarreling over his watch, rings, and pocket-money. And none of the varied squabbles of the afternoon and night had centered around the spot. It was too far from the liquor.

Began March ARGOSY. Single copies, 10 cents.

What more natural than that Kate, unnerved, ignorant, hysterical, should have failed at first glance to detect her old enemy's form as it lay among the shadows, and should have jumped to a conclusion that supernatural agencies were at work?

"Brace up!" I advised her. "Your eyes or your nerves played a very simple trick on you. The slash I gave Kent probably broke his skull, thick as it is. If he had recovered his senses and crawled out into the plaza he would have been killed before he could travel a dozen feet. And we should have known of it. If he *didn't* recover he surely could not have been carried away.

"No, no! The man's lying there still, you may depend on it. And there we must leave him. When the story of this outbreak reaches Perth or one of the nearer garrisons, troops will be sent and he will receive Christian burial. We have no time to do anything about him now. It's one o'clock and we must be off."

Unbelieving, yet docile, she accepted my words as a command. We shouldered our burdens (Kate protesting vigorously but vainly against my determination to carry the heavier of the two bundles), and crept along the inner line of the stockade toward the gate.

Whether or not such caution was needful I do not know. It may be that the convicts, had they been sober and alert enough to heed our departure, would not have sought to stay us. On the other hand, the sight of our bundles might have awakened their cupidity, and in that case a fight must have ensued.

For this, I had just then no appetite.

We gained the gate unobserved and stepped out into the wide, starlit plain. I drew a deep breath. The first whiff of freedom was strangely sweet. Then I glanced back at the inferno I had quitted.

Framed, like some garish picture, by the gate-posts, flared the dying fire. Around it sprawled dozens of the revelers, overcome by drink, battle, and excitement, helplessly asleep.

Beyond, in the farthest radius of the flame-light, lay unburied the bodies of those who had fallen in the afternoon's fight. A score or so of the drunkards still danced or stumbled about the blaze,

bawling their eternal ditty, "Botany Bay."

"Seven long weary years have I been
here
An' seven more have I to stay,
Just for—"

With a shiver of disgust at the sickening memories of torture and confinement awakened in my mind by the doggerel, I turned away and struck forth to the eastward, Kate trudging easily along at my side.

That I was turning my back on an Australian penal settlement for the last time I was certain. For I vowed I would never again submit to such another period of endless agony. Far sooner—and by way of completing the sentence I gripped one of the two heavy revolvers that bulged my side-pocket.

I had not invited nor desired Kate to become the companion of my march. Yet, as she had from the first assumed that we were to go together, I had not gainsaid her wish.

I was already too deep in the brave girl's debt to have the heart to mar her plan. If my companionship could lighten or make safer her journey, I would have to make the best of things.

We had decided to stick to the post-road that ran in an almost straight line from Duladgin to Perth. Word of our escape could not yet have reached the coast, for Duladgin in those days was far beyond the telegraph's scope.

With speed and good fortune we stood a fair chance of arriving at the outskirts of Perth before tidings of the Duladgin revolt could reach there.

We wore no longer the convict garments that might have betrayed us. And a half hour with Kent's razors and shears had shorn away much of the unkempt look of my head and face. At worst, we now appeared no worse than any "Bush" couple coming in from their up-country farm for a week's holiday at the West Australia metropolis.

Once safe in Perth, it only remained for us to find a convenient ship for Europe, or even for India.

The hundred miles between Duladgin and Perth could readily be traversed by two pedestrians as strong as Kate and myself within four days at most. We

would rest during the hot hours of mid-day and press on at our best speed in the coolness of night.

In fact, our escape promised to be ridiculously simple and uneventful by comparison with all the exploits that had led up to and accompanied it. Keyed up as I was to the highest pitch of action, I half regretted this probable peaceful anticlimax to all our adventures.

For perhaps five miles we trudged without speaking. Then Kate glanced sideways at me.

"Why don't you talk to me?" she asked, womanlike.

"What about?" I returned listlessly.

I was beginning to feel the reaction of the past twenty-four hours.

"About *her* if you like," she suggested.

"Her?" I echoed, still inattentive. "Who?"

"Ruth Osborne," she snapped.

The name routed the reverie-mists and brought me to myself.

"If it is just the same to you," I said stiffly, "we won't speak of her at all."

"But it *isn't* just the same to me," corrected Kate, in nowise ruffled. "There's sev'ral things I want to ask about her. Why did you tumble down on your knees and kiss her hand this morning—I mean yesterday morning? 'Cause you loved her? Was that the reason?"

"No," I said with a fresh rush of shame at the memory, "I—"

"Lie No. 1!" proclaimed Kate. "Was she ever your sweetheart?"

"No!" I growled. "She wasn't. Kindly mind your own—"

"Lie No. 2!" tabulated the girl. "Would you 'a' fought Kent quite so murd'rously if it hadn't been she was promised to be his wife? I'll spare you telling lie No. 3, Guy. I've pieced out the whole story and I kind of fancy I've got it straight. Let me tell it to you and you can cut in and put me right if I get off the track."

"I've no desire to hear it," said I. "This is no affair of yours. If you were a man I'd never have let you get so far in speaking of her. As it is—"

"As it is," mimicked Kate, "you'll listen to me. Somewhere, back in the

old country you used to know this Osborne girl. She spoke to you yesterday morning like you was old friends. You hadn't seen a woman of your own kind in so long that hearing one of 'em speak civil, like you was a white man, made you go all to smash.

"And that ain't all. You never looked at any other girl in all your life like you looked at her, there on the veranda. I'll bet my chance of living on that. You ain't the sort to look that way at ev'ry girl that speaks nice to you. You're sweet on her. Tell the truth. Ain't you?"

My indignation was gone. One could never be long angry at this breezy woman, who, shrewd and hardened though she was, had the heart and nature of an overgrown child.

"Yes," I answered. "I am. Does that satisfy you?"

She said no word while we walked perhaps a half mile along the dusty, starlit ribbon of white road between the sand-dunes. Yet, when she spoke, it was as though no time had elapsed between my question and her answer.

"Yes," she replied in a curiously dead, subdued voice, "I s'pose it satisfies me. But I can't—I— Oh, you fool men are all alike! A fluffy pink-and-white chit of a girl, no more use than a doll, and costing as much as a elephant to keep! That's the sort to catch a man's fancy and make him into a fool! A sensible, full-grown woman might argue and order and beg and a man'll never stir out of his tracks for her. But let one of those little wisps of curls and feathers just raise her finger and he'll come a-running. Lord, but it's enough to turn a body sick!"

I could not help laughing aloud at her silly vehemence. Why was she so excited over an abstract case, and why try to drag me into a discussion of something that could hold no special interest for either of us?

I could only hazard a guess that perhaps some time in her former life in England she had been jilted for the sake of such a girl as she had just now so sneeringly described. I was sorry for her, and was casting about in my mind for some way of saying so, when she continued:

"Look at *me*, now! I'm as strong as a man. I can lift a bar'l of flour up to my shoulders. I've got sense, too. Lots of it. And as for looks—well, it ain't for me to say. But a long-haired artist-feller in London one time offered me five shillings an hour to pose for him to paint pictures from. I heard him tell another chap I had the true Greek face—whatever kind of face a true Greek has—and a shape like Venus of Meal—Mile—some place or other.

"Well," she repeated, "look at *me*! Good-looking and some use in the world. Yet—yet look how men run after little doll-faced hussies that couldn't even scrub a floor! Why—"

"That only shows their bad taste," I broke in soothingly. "And even so, you're mistaken. There was hardly a man in the settlement back there who didn't make the wildest sort of love to you. From guard-officers down to long-term men. And you wouldn't so much as look at one of them. You've yourself to blame."

"They weren't my sort," she muttered evasively, and for a time we spoke no more.

My mind was already shaking itself free of the horrors of the past and leaping forward eagerly toward what the future might hold. Once safe out of this miserable country and headed for America, I could take up the threads of life again where Fate a year ago had severed them.

My father, the land of my birth, my career in the army—all awaited me. If the careless boy came back a world-worn man, there were still many consolations.

And the chiefest of these consolations was Ruth.

What was to prevent me, one day, from winning her? She had once, for a few brief, glorious hours, been almost mine. Might she not again—some day— But even with the thought came the sickening certainty that I was building my house of happiness upon a quicksand.

I had killed her lover. Even if she had not loved him as I had once thought she might one day come to love me, still she had been betrothed to him, and his slayer could scarcely hope to meet with favor in her eyes.

Nay, more; no man with an atom of delicacy could, under such circumstances, intrude his presence upon her. We were more utterly divided to-day than ever before.

I tried to steel myself into the idea of never looking on her dear face again. But it was tedious work at best, and I foresaw I should make little progress.

We had walked the stars out of the skies, and all the east was a-flush with coming day. Then Kate again broke the silence:

"She must 'a' known you was sweet on her," began the girl; "any one could 'a' seen it by watching the way you looked at her. Then why did she take up with a sweep and boulder like Cap'n Kent?"

"He's dead!" I reproved her.

"Yes," she assented, "and I s'pose you think I'm pretty low to blackguard a dead man. I don't care if you do. I'm glad daylight's coming. I don't like the idea of walking at night in the same country with a dead man that can get up and move away from where he fell. It ain't comfortable. What d'you s'pose—?"

"I don't suppose anything!" I interrupted with a babyish petulance, "and I'd thank you not to talk about it or about Miss Osborne. Kent wrecked my life. I killed him. Isn't that enough to haunt me, without having his name forever dinged into my ears. I—I cared for Miss Osborne. I shall never see her again. Haven't you sense enough to let that subject alone, too?"

Now, looking back at my peevish outbreak, I cannot realize that it was I—grown man, with some slight pretensions to the title of gentleman—who spoke thus brutally to a woman. Least of all to a woman who had done and dared so much for my sake.

My sole excuse must be the superhuman strain and sleeplessness of the past fortnight, the nightmare events of the preceding day, and my utter nervous and physical exhaustion.

Indeed, the last was becoming so overwhelming that I more than once stumbled as I walked, and had much ado to shake off the lethargy of fatigue that encompassed body and brain. So it was that Kate's endless harping on the two subjects most painful to me had at last wrung from my ill-temper the rough

words I had the instant grace to be sorry for.

For a moment or two Kate made no reply. But as I opened my lips to apologize, she said very quietly:

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. But I don't think you'd have spoken that way to the ladies you know at home—to Miss Osborne. Would you?"

"No," I answered, "I wouldn't. And I had no right to speak so to *you*. I beg your pardon."

"Oh, that's all right," she replied cheerfully. "I didn't mean to rile you. Something lacking in me, I s'pose. What is it, I wonder?"

"The word you're looking for," I suggested, "is 'Tact!'"

"'Tact?'" she repeated. "Never heard it before."

I tried to explain. As I went on, her puzzled face cleared.

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed. "I know what that is now. I'd never heard of it before under that name. In Southampton Road we call it 'lying.'"

I despaired of teaching her the difference. In fact, I have sometimes had trouble in convincing myself of it. My weariness was increasing to the point of actual pain. As the great, red sun shot up over the bush I pointed out a broad grove of gum-trees a bare half mile from the road.

"Where there are woods of that formation," said I, "there is certain to be underbrush. And, growing in the sand-wastes, as they do, those trees are sure to be watered by springs. That means both safe hiding and fresh water. I move we cross over to the grove and get some rest. In an hour, at most, the heat will be too severe for marching. And, besides, we might meet carts or riders. We mustn't be seen so near Duladgin, if we can help it. Six hours' sleep will make new people of us."

She assented and we turned off the road toward that big, isolated patch of foliage afforded by the dwarf gum-tree plantation.

My bundle had hourly been growing heavier as we tramped. Now it seemed to weigh a ton. The shifty sand, too, as we left the road, made wretched footing. Incidentally, it made a trail a child might have followed.

Kate had borne the long walk without a murmur. Yet I could see she was well-nigh as weary as I.

The sun was rising fast in the cloudless sky and its heat increasing. Already the shade of the woods promised a pleasant relief from the merciless rays.

"Here at last!" I sighed contentedly, as I slung down my bundle at the base of a spreading gum-tree. "Now for—!"

I got no further. Darting forward, I drew my revolvers and crouched behind a clump of bushes, my eyes fixed warily on a break in the undergrowth just in front of us.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE.

THE woods were very still, when we entered them. The squeak of a bandicoot, scurrying away through the thickets at our approach, and the more distant squalling of a little colony of newly awakened parrots were the only sounds that met our ears in the early morning hush.

Thus it was that, hearing the undergrowth beyond crackling under a very evidently human tread, all my fatigue seemed to vanish, and I was again tense and watchful, ready to sell my new-found liberty at higher price than any approaching enemy might dare to pay.

I stood on guard, with Kate behind me, for several seconds that stretched out like as many hours. Then I felt a touch on my left arm, and so highly strung had I become that I well-nigh wheeled about to grapple this newest foe.

But it was only Kate.

"Give me one of your pistols," she whispered imperiously. "I can shoot a bit. And you couldn't aim decent with your left hand."

As she spoke, I yielded one of the service revolvers to her, and she took her place calmly at my side.

And now the advancing footsteps were perceptibly nearer. There could be no doubt that the intruder—still wholly invisible through the dense brushwood—was coming straight toward us; probably aiming for that very gap in the bushes on which our eyes were centered.

Could it be one or more of the guard,

returning to the abandoned post at Duladgin, or a bevy of our fellow captives who had mistaken their way to Fort Jackson, or perchance a party of bushwhackers on the lookout for travelers? Be the foe one or many, we were ready—we two desperate fugitives.

The nearer bushes waved, and my forefinger tightened on the trigger. I think neither of us at all realized the compromising nature our belligerent attitude would present were the oncomers mere settlers who had chanced to camp in the wood for the night. We had both reached the point where one ceases to reason, and acts solely by native instinct.

Then, in a step, the gap was filled. And my pistol-arm dropped as if smitten with palsy, the weapon falling unheeded to the turf.

A grunt of displeased astonishment from Kate was the only sound in the worldful of startled silence.

For the possible guards—convicts, bushwhackers, what you will—had resolved themselves into one figure. A figure clad in travel-stained white.

Ruth Osborne!

There in the opening, between the dark-green denseness of the leaves, she stood. Slender, infinitely graceful and lovely, even in her brier-rent and road-soiled white dress.

The glory of her gold-red hair, where a vagrant ray of sunlight had become entangled in a gleaming web, set off a wan pallor of face that went to my very heart. She swayed with fear and weariness, and clutched at the branches for support.

I do not know how long we three stood there—the eternal triangle of two women and a man—staring dumbly and without expression, one at another. Then a light of recognition and of glad relief sprang into Ruth's eyes, and she took a step toward me.

But before she could reach us her head drooped, and she reeled forward.

I caught her in my arms—oh, the pathetically light, fragile weight of her!—and drew her to me till her wreath of hair streamed unbound over my shoulder and almost to my knees.

Again I thought I detected a sound of some sort from Kate, but I could not be sure, and I was too absorbed to care, or

even to glance in her direction. For in my arms I held the world's desire—all that made life worth living.

What mattered it that the form I clasped lay passive in my embrace, because bereft of consciousness? For the instant she was *mine*! And the long dark months rolled away, leaving us two alone in a glory-world of our own.

Yet scarce had Ruth's head touched my shoulder when I felt life rush back upon her, and she recovered her senses. Still supporting her on my left arm, I drew forth a flask I had filled from the brandy keg and placed it to her lips.

As she drank the mouthful of fiery liquid I forced upon her I saw the faint color come back to her cheeks, and into her great blue eyes returned knowledge.

"You are better?" I asked.

"Yes. I think I am all right now. It was so weak of me to faint. I never did it before. It has been such a dreadful night. And—and, oh, it was so good to see you! I was afraid it—"

She paused and, apparently, for the first time became aware of Kate's presence. She stiffened imperceptibly, and drew away from my supporting arm, while a slow look of dazed inquiry filled her face as she glanced from one to the other of us. The inquiry deepened into something distantly akin to scorn.

But Kate was in nowise abashed. From under her great black brows she gave my sweetheart look for look. Her swarthy cheek flushed a dull red, and her dark eyes flashed back the world-old defiance of the mob for the patrician. This and, it seemed to me, something more that I could not read.

At Murfreesboro, in '62, I was so fortunate as to capture a Confederate regimental standard, cutting my way to it amid a veritable hailstorm of musketry and bayonet thrusts. My horse was killed under me, but I took the flag.

Again, at Chickamauga, I had ridden back into that most awful of horrors known as a "rout," and had dragged from under the charging Southern cavalry's hoofs the wounded body of my colonel. These and other minor feats had gained me some slight name for courage.

Also, it will be remembered, I had faced Secretary Stanton, whom few men dared to cross.

Yet in none of the foregoing clashes had I been assailed by the utterly craven fear that now possessed me.

Let him who dare make such a claim say that he can stand fearless, one man between two wrathful women. If he tell the truth I pronounce him a hero. But I think he is a liar.

Of a certainty that man is not I. For I wished myself anywhere—even back at Duladgin—rather than in this situation wherein I now found myself.

Here were two women who could not, by the widest stretch of the imagination, ever like or understand each other! Women as far apart as light and darkness.

Here was I, loving one of them; deep in the other's debt for more than could ever be repaid. And here we three were probably destined to travel together for many days.

Ruth was the first to speak. Turning from her inspection she asked me, and there was a sweet, clear ring as cold as ice in her voice:

"Will you please introduce me—if you can?"

The hint in the last phrase stung me to action.

I spoke briefly and to the point. In perhaps a dozen curt sentences I told her who Kate was, and what she had done for me.

Kate, in confused ill-temper, sought again and again to interrupt my narrative.

But its real interruption came like a thunderclap to us both.

For, as I reached the words: "And having saved me from the condemned cell, she turned aside Stephen Kent's sword from my throat," Ruth, with no hesitancy or hint as to what she was about to do, stepped suddenly forward and kissed the dumfounded convict woman full on the mouth.

"You are splendid!" she murmured, her blue eyes swimming. "Will you forgive me and be my friend?"

Had she snatched my pistol from the ground, where I had let it fall, and fired it in Kate's face, the latter could not have been more affected by the utterly unexpected maneuver. She drew back sharply, stared at the younger woman for an instant, then raised her hand slowly and

cautiously to her lips, as though to see if they had undergone some subtle change from the contact with Ruth's.

Yet, when she spoke, it was not to Miss Osborne, but to me, and her tone was full of a sullenness which I had learned to recognize as her mask for the strongest of all her emotions.

"Guy," she said jerkily, "I thought you were a silly fool to tumble down on your knees on the veranda there yesterday, and kiss her hand. I take it all back. You weren't."

Then, without another word, she turned hurriedly away and, with prodigious bustle, proceeded to rearrange the contents of the bundles that lay on the grass behind us.

Ruth, with womanly intuition, began to talk very fast, pretending not to observe the woman's strangeness of action and word.

"I think," she said, "we must each be wondering how the other happens to be here. Shall I tell my story first, or will you?"

"Ours is brief," I replied. "We secured these clothes and escaped from Duladgin a little after midnight. We have been walking ever since, and must have come fifteen miles or so. We turned into these woods to rest during the heat of the day. There you have our adventures in brief."

Purposely I had slurred over the details of our escape. I had not the heart to tell her yet of her lover's death. Better, for the little time that could remain, be content to bask in her good graces. I should lose them forever soon enough.

"Now for *your* adventures!" I hurried on, as I saw she was about to question me further. "You left Duladgin yesterday noon with Mr. Bradway, didn't you? In the government coach, and with a guard of twenty mounted police. And now—"

"And now I am alone, but for you two. I was on my way back to Duladgin when I met you."

"But your uncle?"

"He is on his way to Perth. Or, rather, he must be almost there by now. He was riding fast when I last saw him."

She flushed, and spoke with forced gaiety, to hide some pain or humiliation. I caught at her last sentence.

"Riding?" I repeated. "But the coach?"

"Is still in the road where they left it, I suppose."

"Left it? Who? Bushwhackers? Surely, your escort was strong enough to—oh, excuse me for interrupting so! I'll try to be patient. Go on with your story, won't you, please."

"It was about three o'clock in the afternoon," she began, "when the front axle of the coach broke. It couldn't be mended, so one of the men galloped back toward Duladgin for a wheelwright and a spare axle. We broke down only a mile or so beyond here. He had been gone about an hour, when he came tearing back at full speed.

"It seems he hadn't reached Duladgin at all. On the way he had met one of the keepers, who had told him about a wonderful gold-find at Mount Jackson. The keeper and some others were on their way there. They had deserted. Our messenger was going to join them on the spot at first. Then he remembered his brother was with our escort, and he decided to take him along. That was why he came back at all.

"No sooner had the rest of the escort heard the great news than every man of them struck spurs into his horse and made off northward, leaving us alone—my uncle and myself. They were all new recruits, you know. This was their first six months in the service. I suppose they had heard of rich gold-finds before, and knew how important it was to be first on the ground."

"But your uncle? Surely—"

"The black driver cut one of the carriage-horses free and rode off with them. That left us with only one horse and a broken-down coach."

"But—"

"Uncle is not very brave, I'm afraid. You see," she added, in hasty excuse, "he has always led a sheltered life, and isn't used to danger or adventure. So he—"

"So he cut the other horse loose, scrambled on his back and galloped off to Perth, leaving you alone in the bush."

"You knew?" she exclaimed, in surprise.

"No. But I know your uncle. Why didn't he ride back to Duladgin? It was nearer."

"He had heard one of the escort say: 'If *all* the guards and keepers are skipping, there's liable to be a jail delivery there before night.' Uncle didn't—"

"Didn't want to ride back into a revolt, and perhaps be killed," I finished. "And, knowing that in case of such a revolt the whole country would probably soon be swarming with desperate men he galloped off to safety, leaving you to your fate? Oh, the vile, unspeakable coward!"

"Hush!" she begged. "You mustn't speak of him that way. You don't do uncle justice."

"You can bet he don't!" interpolated Kate, who had paused in her labors to listen open-mouthed to this recital. "He flatters him a whole lot. Now, if *I* was describin' that dear uncle of yours, miss, I'd say—"

"He said he'd hurry back with cavalry," Ruth intervened; "and told me there was nothing to be afraid of. I tried to be brave. *Really*, I did. But as night came on I could picture those men in their arrow-marked clothes swarming along the road, and I—couldn't stay there in the coach any longer. So I climbed out and came up here and hid in the woods, and tried to get some sleep. And—is there any animal in Australia that cries at night like a child?" she broke off, with a little reminiscent shudder of terror.

"Them's the 'Tasman Devils,'" volunteered Kate. "Funny little spotted, long-tailed critters, something like a cat. They wouldn't bother you."

"They were all around me in the woods," went on Ruth. "It was horrible to listen to them all night. Then, at dawn, I looked out toward the road. There was no one on it, and no signs of convicts anywhere. So I decided there couldn't have been any 'jail delivery,' and I was starting for Duladgin when—"

"You brave, splendid little girl!" I broke in.

In my admiration for Ruth's pluck, I glanced at Kate to see a reflection of my own ardent approval. But again her black brows were knitted in a scowl.

Plainly she did not relish hearing another praised. Some women are that way, I have heard.

"Tell me more about yourselves,"

urged Ruth. "After this heroic girl here saved you—"

"Then we escaped, as I said."

"But the others? Did only you two get away, or—"

"There's not a live thing left in all Duladgin by this time, miss," answered Kate, before I could check her. "Not unless some of the boys has slept so hard after their booze that they haven't got started yet for that Mount Jackson booby-trap."

"But Captain Kent?" gasped Ruth.

Kate bit her full underlip fiercely. She saw, too late, the blunder she had made.

"Oh, well, miss," she said awkwardly, "you're best off without him. He was a bad lot, Kent was. Not fit for the likes of you. I could tell you some stories—"

"Is Captain Kent dead?" asked Ruth, aghast. "Did they—did they *kill* him?"

"He died, Miss Osborne," said I gently, "as a brave soldier would wish to die. Sword in hand, facing a stronger foe. God rest his soul!"

"Oh, the poor, *poor* fellow!" she exclaimed, her eyes filling once more. "And not twenty-four hours ago he was so strong, so full of life!"

Now, to say the least, this was peculiar mourning for the man of one's heart! For a stranger, or even a casual acquaintance, Ruth's words were fitting comment. But for one's fiancé!

I looked at her keenly. Was she "keeping up" in order not to give way to her full feelings before us? If so, she was acting the part magnificently. And yet—

A dim ray of something oddly like hope slipped into the darkness of my heart, only to be driven indignantly forth by that abominably bothersome monitor, common sense. Kate, too, was eying Ruth in wonder.

"Miss Osborne," I said, putting myself resolutely out of the question, "it was cruel of us to tell you this so suddenly. Forgive us. I think, perhaps, you would rather be alone with your grief for a little while. We are going farther into the wood. Call us when you want us."

But she stared at me, her pretty forehead puckered in wonderment, her whole face one wordless question:

"I don't understand!" she said coldly. "Why should this be *my* grief any more than that of a dozen other of Captain Kent's acquaintances? It surely is not the time to joke about—"

"I think," I said—and my heart set to battering so furiously at my ribs that I could scarce speak coherently—"I think, Miss Osborne, that one of us is making a great mistake—I in thinking you were engaged to Captain Kent, or you in thinking to deceive me about it."

"Engaged? Deceive?" she echoed, in a daze.

"Captain Kent told me two weeks ago you were to be his wife," said I. "If—"

"He told you *that*? Heaven forgive him!"

"Then you were not—?"

"I have never been engaged, Mr. Meagher, to Captain Kent or to any one else. If any one has told you so, you were misinformed."

"But your uncle—"

"My uncle had such a wish. A very strong wish. It was not mine."

She was holding herself in check; speaking with far more than her usual hauteur and reserve. I was at a loss to understand this, until I remembered Kate's presence. Yet, all oblivious of that presence, the longing in my overfull heart broke past my guarding lips.

"Tell me!" I begged, "did a few broken words once whispered on ship-board—long, long ago—have anything to do with—"

I got no further. Her eyes that had grown strangely soft and warm as I had begun to speak, now froze into a stare of utter horror. They were looking, not at my eager, pleading face, as before, but over my shoulder at *something* straight behind me.

CHAPTER XIX.

A GHOSTLY RIVAL.

As I saw that look of utter, helpless fright dawn in Ruth Osborne's eyes, I heard a gasp of equal fear from Kate and I wheeled about to learn the cause. But, as I turned, I halted, as paralyzed by amazement as was either of the two women.

There, not ten paces away (having drawn near unheard through the sound-deadening thickness of sand and mold), stood a horse. And on his back, motionless, sat a terrible and ghastly figure.

One arm was outstretched, revolver in hand, the muzzle leveled at my breast.

Above rose a head, swathed from scalp to eyes in what I at first took for a monstrous turban, but which I gradually recognized as a canvas convict-skirt ripped into strips, bandage-fashion. The figure was clad in torn, bloodstained, dirt-blotched, white fatigue uniform.

Under that grotesque bandage glared a frightfully pale, streaked, rage-distorted visage, lighted by a look of hate and actual madness such as never before nor since have I seen painted on human countenance.

On either cheek-bone glowed the scarlet sign-manual of raging high fever. Beneath the shadow of his head-wrappings, blazed eyes that held little of the human and all of the wild beast.

"Stephen Kent!" I muttered, my jaw slack with astonishment.

I grappled with a superstitious awe that threatened to sweep away courage, self-control, and even reason itself. Kate, too, at one side of me, crouched like a graven image, void of voice or motion. A low murmur of dread, and Ruth Osborne sank gently to the ground behind me in a dead faint.

I do not wonder. The sight, following on her sleepless night of terror, was enough to deprive a stronger woman of her senses.

I remember I felt a vague thrill of relief that she at least, of us three, would be spared the scene about to be enacted. For I read murder in Kent's eyes, in every line of his quivering body. Most of all in that leveled weapon whose muzzle never moved from a line with my chest.

Yet, when Ruth fell, I involuntarily stooped to lift her.

"Stop!" croaked Stephen, his voice issuing husky and cracked between his parched lips. "Stand where you are."

The logic of the loaded pistol is ever irrefutable. The more so when clutched by a fever-maddened man who has journeyed far to sate his hatred.

I obeyed the order.

One notices many minor details in moments of great stress. Just as, in a glance, I had grasped all the unwonted aspects of Kent's appearance, so I now noted that he was astride a great, white, raw-boned young bronco which had been but recently brought to Duladgin—the only horse there, by the way—to drag the heavy road-roller and tread the circular water-mill in the plaza.

He had been stabled in an impromptu stall behind the cell-house when not picketed in the bush outside the stockade. I do not wonder that in the flurry of excitement none of us had thought of the beast.

Not only was he new to the settlement, but he was still but half-broken and of little use in an emergency such as ours.

How Kent, weak from his wound, had managed to mount and stay on such an animal was a mystery. But the latter half of it was solved by my second glance. A stout rope about the bronco's middle was passed also around Kent's legs and secured at his waist. Fearing a fainting fit, the warden had thus evidently sought to avert any possibility of a fall by strapping himself to his mount in such a way that nothing short of a dozen knife slashes could cut him loose.

That a man in such a condition could have accomplished the feat—even when buoyed up by the false strength of the fever from his wound—filled me with wonder. A reluctant admiration for his prowess and nerve possessed me.

I had once read that by talking calmly and incisively to a delirious patient or lunatic one may sometimes momentarily bring him to reason. I resolved now to test this theory.

It might postpone my death by a minute or so. At any rate, it was worth the trial.

So, returning Kent's glare with as indifferent a look as I could summon up under the circumstances, I asked, in an inquisitive, matter-of-fact way:

"How did you get here? We left you for dead."

The madness seemed to lessen in his bright, glazed eyes and his cracked lips stretched in a grin.

"Takes more than a beggarly convict to outwit me," he chuckled.

He was ever vain, and I saw with joy

that, through all his fury and dementia, he relished this latest chance of boasting.

I made no reply. He continued, brokenly, in those harsh, fever-parched tones of his:

"Came to myself—sunset. Nothing but nasty scalp cut. Be healed in a week. Head-wound always kills right away or cures in a week. Men were drunk. I got to the cell-house. Hands and knees. Found brandy in a cup"—(what was left, doubtless, of the refection Kate had brought there to me the afternoon before)—"Brandy and biscuit. Kept me keyed up till daylight. That and fever. Then the men woke up and got out. I got the horse and started for Perth. No saddle. Used rope. Had pistol with me. Saw where you left road below there. Easy trail. Here I am. And here I wipe out our score."

His words had come easier as he progressed. Now, toward the close, the grin of vanity was crowded out of his white-and-red mask of a face by the return of that first baleful hate-look.

He was never nice to behold, at best. Now his expression half turned me sick.

He was in high delirium. If only I might divert his attention until I could in some way disarm him! Or, at the least, keep him talking until his crazed brain should possibly take some fresh impulse!

"Why should you kill me?" I asked in that same argumentative, impersonal fashion. "We fought fair and you were worsted. That ought to be enough. If you aren't content, let me get my pistol from the ground back there and we'll fight it out on even terms."

"Not much!" he grinned. "I've got you—where I want you. Stop, there!" he snarled at Kate, as she raised a hand to her belt into which she had thrust her second revolver, and edged a step nearer me.

I read the plucky girl's intent to slip the pistol to me and thus give me a chance for my life. But Kent, too, for all that his eyes seemed to rest on me alone, had also been cunning enough to detect her purpose.

At sound of the warden's sharp order, years of enforced, implicit obedience reasserted themselves, and the convict woman halted.

Kent surveyed us grimly; his leveled pistol never once wavering, his other hand controlling with no conscious effort the impatient, restless motions of his pawing horse. A great horseman, and a man who mastered his own body as strongly as he curbed his half-broken mount!

I tried another tack, as I saw his trigger-finger contract.

"I wish," said I indifferently, "you'd let me move. Miss Osborne has fainted. Either Kate or I ought to try to revive her. Just a moment and—"

"Halt!" he croaked, anticipating my action. "She'll wake up soon enough. But when—when she wakes, her dear convict will—will be asleep for good. The thief she begged me to be kind to yesterday—*begged* me, mind you—in softer words than I'd ever had from her—he won't be so good to look at when I've done with him. One—two—"

Instinctively I shut my eyes and braced myself for the end. But the count of "three!" did not come. Instead, he laughed again in his hoarse, crackling dryness of throat.

It was well in keeping with the man's character that he should seek to torture me to the last, by making me undergo the expectation of instant death.

"Have done!" I shouted to him, an illogical anger at his persecution welling up in me. "Shoot, if you're going to! Don't play with me like a cat with a mouse."

"With pleasure, my dear cousin," he sneered, a faint return of his old-time mockery stealing into face and voice. "Rest in peace! I'll marry her yet, now that you're out of the way. One—"

Now, had it not been for that one last speech of his this story would never have been written. For the apathy of coming death was already beginning to fasten upon me.

But his words raised before me a picture of the persecutions to which Ruth would henceforth be subjected—the helplessness of the luckless girl when she should recover her senses only to find herself wholly in the power of this madman.

So, as he began again that hateful, droning count, I raised my head, alive with new resolution. I played my last card. An old and outworn one, but a trick that had succeeded before now.

Looking him easily in the eyes, I broke into a laugh of contempt. A poor effort at mirth, but it served.

"Before you shoot," I suggested with elaborate sarcasm, "mightn't it be well to cock your revolver?"

Now, his revolver was already at full cock. But, as is the effect nine times out of ten, my remark made him shift his gaze momentarily toward the weapon.

I seized that fraction of a second's grace to spring at him. The maneuver took him by surprise. The pistol barrel wavered. My one hope was that he might in confusion fire pointblank and miss.

Before he could have steadied and sighted the revolver again I would have been upon him. But, as I sprang, my toe became entangled in a network of ground-vine and the impetus of my leap flung me so hard that I fell prone on my face, half stunned.

The bronco reared and tried to bolt, as I crashed down almost at his very feet. Kent brought the horse around with a single twist of his powerful hand; then, leaning far forward over his mount's shoulder he fired twice, downward, at my prostrate body.

All this I saw as I jerked my head up from the ground. I felt, at the same moment, some one rush by me, brushing my shoulders in the movement.

As Kent had pressed the trigger, Kate, who had been watching for the psychical moment, bounded forward between us. Drawing her pistol as she did so, she fired at scarcely six-foot distance, square into Stephen's face. There was no missing at that range.

At the triple shot, the bronco whirled about in panic, but not before I saw—by means I will not set down in detail here—that Stephen Kent had at last received a "head-blow" that would not "heal in a week." In fact, the heavy revolver bullet, at pointblank range, had left little of human semblance in that fever-distorted face.

The horse, his plunge for freedom no longer checked by his rider's iron hand, was already clear of the wood. Straight out, across the trackless bush swept the fear-maddened brute, at full speed, the thunder of his flying hoofs dying away to a dull, rhythmic thud-thud over the plain.

And, on his back, bound there by the stout ropes his own hand had tied, swayed and swung the lifeless figure of the erstwhile warden of Duladgin. His body flapped back and forth grotesquely with the runaway's irregular stride, his arms flying loosely out at either side as if in vehement gesticulation.

Over the sunbaked bush they flew, the living and the dead, a swirl of yellow dust-cloud dancing along in their wake. Half rising, I watched their flight with a stupid fascination. Into my dazed mind fitted a memory of the Apocalypse's picture of "Death on a pale horse" as my eye followed that awful progress of white steed and lifeless rider.

A gasp and a murmured word or two from the ground behind, recalled me from the gruesome spectacle.

I turned to find Ruth Osborne struggling to her feet. In the orgy of action I had actually forgotten her.

She was herself again, though still white and trembling. She looked about her with wide eyes of fear.

"I—I thought I heard shots!" she whispered. "I—"

"Don't try to speak yet," I urged, hurrying to her side. "Drink more of this."

And again the flask and my arm were brought into play. Weak and shaken from her long swoon, she could at first scarcely swallow the stimulant. But soon a fragment of strength returned, and with it memory.

"Oh!" she moaned, "I thought—I—oh, I had the most terrible vision! I thought Captain Kent—with his head bound up—and—"

"You're mistaken, dear," I lied soothingly. "There is no one here but Kate and ourselves. Speak to her, Kate!"

The other woman had stood aloof without word or motion, the revolver still in her hand. Now, unobserved by Ruth, she slipped the weapon back into her belt and took an unsteady step toward us.

Her uncertain gait and a new look in her swarthy face, made me rise in haste from my post by Ruth's side and advance toward her, full of contrition at my neglect. So taken up had I been with Ruth's recovery that I had not so much as paused to thank Kate for her splendid help.

As I faced her, she smiled bravely up at me, but the rich, glowing color was gone from her cheeks.

"You're not hurt?" I queried anxiously.

"No," she retorted with a flash of her old-time impatience. "I'm not."

Then, with a trace of awe in her deep, full voice, she added more softly: "I think, Guy—I *think* I'm killed!"

CHAPTER XX.

A STRANGE INTERLUDE.

I LOOKED at the girl, speechless with astonishment; at a loss to guess if she were joking or in earnest. She staggered, ever so slightly; then, with an effort, regained her balance.

"I wonder," she said, with a quizzical little smile, "I wonder whether you'd 'a' caught *me* in your arms, if I'd 'a' fallen, then? If you'd 'a' caught me like you caught *her* a while ago. There! Don't pay attention to my foolishness. I was only in fun," and she tried to laugh.

"Then you're *not* hurt?" I cried, much relieved.

"I said," she repeated slowly, as if teaching a lesson to a child, and speaking in her former hushed voice, "that I *think* I'm killed. And"—with seeming lack of consequence—"I'm awf'ly tired, Guy."

Before I could come to her aid, she had sunk wearily to the grass, her head resting on a great exposed root of one of the gum-trees. She sighed contentedly as she stretched out her weary body.

"It's *good* to rest," she murmured, as if already half asleep. "I'm tireder than I thought. And it's good to go to sleep out here with a whole skyful of fresh air around me and trees and—and *you*, Guy. It's easier'n I was afraid it'd be."

"What are you saying?" I pleaded, utterly at a loss to construe her odd manner. "Are you really only worn out, or did one of that brute's bullets touch you?"

"*One* of them? *Both*, Guy! Both of them, thank God! For if *I* hadn't gotten 'em, *you* would. Oh, it's all right! Don't look like that! It's all right, lad, I tell you."

Ruth Osborne thrust me to one side and was bending over the recumbent woman before I could move or wake from my daze of horror.

All trace of Ruth's faintness was gone. Active, tender, effective, she knelt at the poor girl's side, her white hands busy unfastening the neck of the gaudy yellow dress in whose new possession Kate had taken such pride.

Meanwhile she was murmuring comfort and encouragement to the sufferer, who now lay quiet with half-closed eyes.

"Please give me the brandy flask," Ruth commanded me. "And any linen there may be in either of those bundles. And then go and see if you can find water. I passed a spring some distance back, near the edge of the woods, this morning. Walk straight along the outskirts and you'll come to it. Take along one of those bottles and fill it."

She was rending the flounce of her linen skirt into long, even strips as she gave her orders. Noting, perhaps, my look of surprise at her businesslike air, she added:

"I took a course in nursing, you know, in New York, year before last, and I took it up again last winter. Oh, *please* hurry and get the water."

I was off, my brain awlirl, hastening through the underbrush at the outskirts of the grove. It took me an interminable time to find the spring, my overhaste as much as my weariness impeding me. Then, seeking to return by a shorter route, I lost my bearing and had to retrace my steps to the edge of the woods. Altogether, I was gone what appeared to me an interminable while.

I could not trust myself to think. All I knew was that some one—a woman, at that—had thrown herself between me and murder and had taken the wounds—perhaps the death—aimed at me.

The knowledge was enough to fill me with a shame and grief such as I had never before known.

From the night, weeks ago, when Kate had spread her blanket over me to ward off the cold from my tired body as I lay under the stars on the Duladgin sand-strip—from that night she had ever stood between me and harm.

Yes, now that I remembered, her care of me had begun long before. I could

recall a dozen lesser instances unnoticed at the time.

And afterward!

Her coming between Kent and myself when the warden had sought to humiliate me by ordering me to tie his shoe. The warning of Bradway's and Kent's plot on my life. The rescue from the cell-house. The casting of the skirt over my opponent's head when his saber was at my throat. And now, this crowning sacrifice of all!

That I, a man, should be so beholden to any woman! That a woman should risk her life thus for a thankless comrade who, not an hour ago, had spoken roughly, brutally to her.

I was back at the spot whence I had started, and ran toward the two women with my bottle of water. Ruth rose from her knees and came toward me. But she did not take the water I thrust forward to her. Instead, she whispered:

"It is no use. There is nothing we can do for her."

"You mean—?"

"Either one of the shots, by itself, would have caused a mortal wound. Even if the best surgeon in all West Australia were here, he could do nothing. It is only a question of an hour or so at most. She knows, and she is so brave, so calm and strong! I think she knew from the moment the shots struck her."

I could not speak. The woods and sky grew dim and misty and there was a great lump in my throat.

I remembered how I had rushed to Ruth's aid, heedless of the possible hurt of the girl who had saved my life.

What a heartless beast I had been! And not one word of reproach or complaint had she uttered!

"She wants to speak to you," went on Ruth unsteadily, "*alone*, she says. Go to her. I will wait here."

I crossed to where Kate lay, her strong, graceful body stretched out on the green turf as if in mere repose. I knelt down beside her and her dark eyes, that had been closed as in sleep, slowly opened. Then a smile stole into her face.

"I was afraid I might go to sleep before you came back, Guy," she said in a half whisper. "I'm so glad you're here. I *didn't* want to go without seeing you. And—"

"You're *not* going!" I protested vehemently. "We'll soon get you well."

"Don't lie, dear lad!" she smiled. "You can't do it well enough. You aren't used to it. Maybe because you're a gentleman. It's nice to have known a gentleman. A *real* one. It's something to remember. You've been awful square to me, Guy. Always treated me like I was a real lady when all the time you must 'a' been thinkin' inside 'She's just a common low thief, not fit—'"

"I *never* thought so!" I cried. "*Never*, Kate! You were—"

"That's true," she answered, wonderingly. "You never did. It's funny. But you didn't. Maybe that's why I loved you so. For, you knew I loved you all along, didn't you, Guy?"

My face of blank, horrified astonishment must have convinced her of the contrary. For she went on, before I could speak:

"That's so. You didn't even suspect. I kept thinking you must know and that it was because you were a gentleman that you didn't let on about it. I see now. Oh, Guy, for a grown man there's lots you don't know yet! Did you s'pose I'd 'a' done the things for you that I did—and that I'd 'a' gloried in the chance of doing 'em as I did—if it wasn't that I loved every bit of you so much that it was like a knife in my heart to think of hurt coming to you?"

There was something awesome, terrible, in the passionate outpouring of this dying woman's innermost soul-secrets. It strangled back the words I would have spoken, and left me for the moment helpless, stunned.

I had heard coxcombs boast that women have avowed unasked love to them. At the time their bragging had merely seemed to me an instance of nauseating bad taste. But the real thing, when now it came to me, was so appalling, so sudden a glimpse into the unknown depths, that my very heart shrank at the fear-someness, the terrific sacredness of it all.

"Don't look as if I'd been confessing a murder to you!" she protested jestingly. "It isn't a time for pretending to be what we aren't. So why shouldn't I tell you? I've always wanted to. But—if things had turned out different, you'd never 'a' known. I'd 'a' bitten my

tongue out sooner'n tell you. Only—now—it seemed to me I'd pass easier if I could say it just once. I love you, Guy, dear. I *love* you! Does it make you angry to hear me say that?"

Still that dumb awe gripped at my lips. She went on, with a shyness wholly new to her:

"You—you never cared even a little bit about *me*, did you, Guy? Not even before *she* came to Duladgin? It'd be kind of nice to hear you say it. But," she added, with another wan smile, "it'd be a lie, if you *did* say it, dear, and if you could lie you wouldn't be the splendid lad I love. So, we'll let it go at that, shan't we?"

There was a minute of silence, and her eyes closed again. But soon they opened, and she went on more weakly:

"I'm glad you've found her, Guy. At first I hated her. I could 'a' choked her when she came out of the thicket toward us this morning. But I was wrong. All, *all* wrong. So don't be cross with me about it. And I want to take back what I said about 'pink-and-white dolls' and—and—'baby-faced chits' and all that. It wasn't true. Not a word of it. You and she are going to be happy, old boy. Happier'n even I would 'a' been if you'd cared the way I did."

She laughed, and tried to resume her old brusk cynicism of manner. It was a piteous failure, with the death-mists already clouding her dark eyes.

"I'm talking like a fool!" she scoffed. "Think of the Southampton Road shop-lifter, 'Quick-Finger Kate,' falling in love with a *gentleman*! And falling in love the way the goody-goody girls in books do! Why don't you laugh, Guy? The whole settlement would 'a' roared over it."

"*Don't!* Don't speak so!" I begged, finding my tongue at last, under the sting of her broken-hearted raillery. "The best man on earth might covet such love as yours, you hero-woman! I—"

"Thanks, dear," she said, the bitterness and sham gaiety all gone from her voice, and in their stead an ineffable content.

She looked at me quietly, smilingly, for a few moments, then said:

"Do you remember the time the trav'ling parson stopped at Duladgin and old

Meade made us all hear him preach? There was a text, or something he kept repeating, in his sermon, about 'Greater love—greater love has no man than this—than this'—"

She paused as if searching her memory for the exact words.

"'That a man lay down his life for his friend' " I finished.

"That's it!" she answered gladly. "'Lay down his life for his friend.' And we *are* good friends, aren't we, Guy? The best sort of friends?"

"Indeed we are!" I assented brokenly. "You are the best, stanchest, most loyal friend a worthless man ever had. I wish I'd been better worthy your friendship. I've treated you so selfishly, and—"

She raised one tired hand and laid it across my mouth in a weak little gesture of silence. Then she said, with a return of that strange timidity:

"You won't be angry, Guy? And at the worst you can only say, 'I won't' and maybe scold me. But there's one thing I'd be ever and ever so much happier for, Guy. I— You won't believe me, dear, but no man in all my life has ever kissed me. And—"

She halted, the pale face blushing ever so slightly. I understood. Bending over her, I kissed her. Once on the forehead and again on the lips. Then I glanced across to where Ruth sat awaiting the end of our interview. And in my sweetheart's eyes I read only approval and a world of sorrowing pity.

"Thank you, Guy, dear," whispered Kate, her whole face alight as with some mystic glow from within. "I—I think I shall sleep very sweetly after that."

CHAPTER XXI.

OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

THE long shadows of coming sunset were stretching across the bush, when Ruth came to the bit of sward where I lay asleep and touched my shoulder.

"Come," she said. "It is time to start."

I got to my feet, dull and stupid with slumber. Little by little, recollection came back.

The grave we had laboriously hol-

lowed out in the soft forest mold, the fragments of the burial service I had repeated from scanty memory, the wild-flowers wherewith Ruth had heaped the pathetic little mound.

Then reaction had set in in earnest, and I had felt the irresistible onrush of physical exhaustion. It had been arranged we should rest until sunset and then begin our journey toward Perth. As soon as my body touched earth I had sunk into a deep sleep.

Stupid as I at first felt, my sleep had made a new man of me. By the time I had plunged my head and face into the cold waters of the spring I felt ready and eager to take up the strain of toil and peril that lay awaiting me.

I returned to the clearing to find that Ruth had repacked the bundles and had spread out a little lunch for us on the clean, sweet grass.

She, too, was manifestly the better for the long day's rest. But for an infinite sadness in her flowerlike face she was apparently quite recovered. Her fragile body evidently contained more reserve force than I had suspected.

We sat down and ate, facing each other across our impromptu table. We forced our talk away from the bitter sorrow that engrossed us, and fell to planning for the immediate future.

"We ought to cover ten or twelve miles to-night," I said, "if you are strong enough. Then if we can rest to-morrow without being seen, by the next day we ought to reach one of the Avon River farms. There we can easily invent some story of our horse running off, and get some sort of vehicle to carry us the rest of the way to Perth."

"Even if we can't," she answered, "we can make it on foot in a very few days. Don't be afraid I shall impede you. I am a capital walker. And if you find I can't go fast enough, I sha'n't be at all offended if you press on without me. I know how much depends on your reaching the coast before—"

"Before news of the outbreak gets there?" I broke in, ignoring her suggestion. "That's why I want to find a horse and buckboard if we can. We'll need all our speed, I'm afraid."

"But why do you worry about that? It may be weeks before—"

"You forget your uncle. You said he had galloped on to Perth for troops."

"Oh, I forgot. I forgot all about him. What can we do?"

"I've figured it out. He started late yesterday afternoon. It must be eighty-five miles to Perth, at the very least. A man of his weight and unathletic condition, on a plodding coach-horse, could scarcely make the trip under three days. Allow two days more for a forced march of cavalry back to Duladgin and it gives us five days. But we can't travel by the main road or we shall run straight into them. I've heard there's a bush road somewhere to the south, skirting the Avon. We must strike through for that. It will mean a longer journey, but a much safer one."

"Every port is certain to be watched for the next few weeks, isn't it?"

"I'm afraid so," I muttered gloomily. "But when I once reach the coast I'll find some way or other of getting aboard ship. If you're through eating, shall we start now?"

She stooped to pick up one of the bundles. I took it from her, despite her indignant protest and threw it over my shoulder with my own. The weight was decidedly heavy, and common sense once more told me how much more the slowness and labor of my journey would be increased by the presence of Ruth instead of strong, hardy Kate.

Yet I would gladly have borne double the weight and ten times the perils and delays for the sake of being with the girl—who was now begging me so urgently and so vainly for leave to carry her share of the burden.

As we set forth toward the road, leaving the shadow of the woods behind us, I felt as though I had also left there all my sorrows and my dreary times of hardships. The weight of the double bundle was almost unnoticed. Even the sad recollection of the gallant soul whose passing had so wrung our hearts seemed changed into a tender, sweet memory.

The sun's edge was touching the western horizon of the limitless miles of bush. In the grove behind us the parrots were chattering gaily, their gaudy scarlet and yellow plumage flashing like winged flame in their flights from tree to tree.

A kangaroo rat hopped out of a bunch

of wire-grass almost at our feet and scuttled away with grotesque little leaps. A plaintive, childlike voice from the deeper parts of the wood arose in a sobbing cry. At the sound Ruth gave an involuntary shudder, recognizing the "Tasma Devils," whose wails had so frightened her during the previous night.

We left the spongy sand and gained the easier, harder surface of the white road. Onward, into the sunset we walked, the skies in front seeming to beckon us with wavering streamers of pink and gold.

"See!" said Ruth, pointing to the horizon, "the future is roseate. It is an omen! Won't you take it as one? Can't you put the past behind you?"

With her at my side, moving onward toward a fairy world of promise, how could I do aught else? But the memory of the morning bade me postpone the words of love that clamored for utterance.

"There is something I would like to ask you," Ruth went on. "You needn't answer me unless you want to. But Kate called you 'Guy.' Is that your name?"

"My name is Guy Bruce," I answered.

"Guy Bruce?" she echoed. "Why, that's the name of Captain Kent's American cousin. Are you—?"

"Yes. I was his cousin. How did you know?"

"One night he had—he had been drinking—and he was dining with us in London. And he was angry at having lost at Ascot. He said: 'If it were not for that cousin of mine, Guy Bruce, I'd be a rich man.' I didn't pay much attention to it at the time. But why did you call yourself 'Meagher'? Or is that none of my business?"

"Anything that concerns me is as much your business as you'll permit it to be," said I. "Kent is dead. So one of my greatest reasons for silence is gone. I think you already have a pretty fair estimate of your aunt's husband, O'Hara Bradway. So what I say is not likely to change your estimate of him. You asked me once to tell you my miserable story. Do you still wish to hear it?"

"You know I do."

"And you will give me your word not to repeat it or use the information in any way at all?"

"Not even to save you, if necessary? I can't promise that. Not even for the sake of knowing the truth about you."

"Then I fear I can't—"

"Oh, I promise, then. You wouldn't ask me to unless there was some good reason, would you?"

"It's a wretched, sordid little tale," I began, "and I'm afraid you'll think me a quixotic fool. But if it was all to be gone over again I'd do as I did. It was the only course open. I—"

We had passed the broken-down coach and were swinging along at a good gait down the open road. There was a ridge directly ahead, at whose cliff-like base the highway took a sudden turn.

This curve we were approaching when I broke off short in my scarce-begun narrative, and halted, listening. I motioned to Ruth to stop also, and she watched me questioningly.

"What is it?" she asked at length.

"Horses," I answered. "A number of them. And moving in military order. They are coming this way."

My years of training at scout work stood me in good stead. They had enabled me to detect the rhythmic beat of hoofs while yet they were inaudible to my companion and to read their nature and direction.

"They are coming at a fast trot," I went on. "They will be here in another five minutes. If only we might reach the ridge. There might be some chance to hide."

We hurried forward. By now the hoof-beats were plainly audible.

"Even if they *do* see us," suggested Ruth, "what is there to fear? My uncle cannot possibly have reached Perth in this time and brought back reinforcements. This is probably a detached troop of mounted police, patrolling the roads. If they see us there's no reason why they should know we're from Duladgin. If they are Perth men they'll probably recognize me. And they won't think it likely I'd be with a convict. All we have to do is to walk straight on. We can't reach the ridge in time. I'm hurrying as fast as I can, but—oh, here they come! *Do* try to look unconcerned!"

Around the bend came a half dozen dust-covered colonial cavalymen, riding abreast, their horses at full trot, the men

riding at ease as on a long yet hurried march. Behind them, past the rocky turn, appeared a second rank and then a third.

On they came, more and more, sabers clanking, carbines thrust muzzle downward into the "boots" of their right stirrups; their leader, sword in hand, jingling along at one side of the front rank.

Escape or hiding was out of the question. The soldiers were already between us and the sheltering rocks. Nothing was left but to follow Ruth's advice and brave the matter out. We drew up far to one side of the road so as to give them room to pass.

I tossed down the bundles and, kneeling beside them with my back to the road, feigned to busy myself rearranging their contents. Ruth, standing upright at my side, watched the horsemen in frank interest.

The advance guard of the troop came alongside. The young officer eyed Ruth keenly. Then he drew up and brought his horse to a standstill beside her.

"Miss Osborne!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"It's all right, Major Cole," she returned serenely. "Don't let us stop you. We are walking on to the nearest rest-house."

"But—"

"But you are in a hurry, and this time it isn't even a question of a 'damsel in distress.' The damsel in question is very comfortably situated, as it happens. Now hurry on. When a whole battalion of her majesty's West Australian Horse rides at full speed in weather like this there must be cause for haste."

"There certainly is," agreed the major (and it seemed to me I could feel his eyes burning holes in my back). "But I understood—"

"John!" cried Ruth addressing me in mock exasperation, "will you *never* finish arranging those bundles? We shall be late reaching the rest-house, and the others will be worried about us. Do hurry!—so much for hiring a newly landed servant," she explained dolefully to the officer.

"Can't one of my men—?" he began.

"No, thank you," she answered politely. "There goes the last file of your command! You'll have to gallop yourself into a perspiration if you want to catch up with them. Good-by! Don't forget to come to my tea on the fifteenth, if you're back in Perth by that time. Come, John! Aren't those bundles ready?"

The major clattered off in pursuit of his departing men and Ruth turned to me with a delighted little laugh of sheer relief.

"There!" she cried, "could any one have got rid of him more neatly than that? See, they're all gone and the coast is clear."

"You're a born diplomat," I declared gleefully, as I jumped to my feet and slung the bundles over my shoulder again. "With any sort of luck at all, our road is as free, henceforth, as—"

We had come to the sharp curve in the highway and I drew Ruth suddenly back, just in time to prevent her from being ridden down by a new group of horsemen.

The foremost of the riders was O'Hara Bradway!

(To be continued.)

A NOBLE RESOLVE.

It is enough for me to know
I've follies of my own,
And on my heart some care bestow,
And let my friends alone.

What are another's faults to me?
I've not a vulture's bill
To pick at every flaw I see
And make it wider still.

WHY THE CARS COLLIDED.

By HELEN FAIRCHILD DUKE.

An impromptu automobile episode that shattered the lethargy of a summer's afternoon and incidentally repaired a break.

"REALLY, this is more than frail human nature can stand! Positively, Raymond, if you get your feet wet again I'll put you to bed."

"All wite."

"I believe it is all right—'most anything seems to go with you. What on earth does your mother do with you all day—hold your hand? Now, you'll find I mean what I say. Or else I'll let you stay wet until you dry by evaporation."

"What's that?"

"You'll learn by experience presently—though it may throw your doting mother into nervous prostration. Well, I'll be— There you go again!"

The speaker made a wild dive with one arm over the edge of the float, held aloft a small specimen of future manhood—and exasperatedly shook it until the water flew in a shower from its dripping pink knickerbockers.

"Ow! I'd ravver go to bed! Come on, Uncle Sydney. 'N you can tell me stories."

"Not on your life!" savagely. "I'll do no such thing. I wish there were a dark cell here—I'd put you in it and keep you there."

A wail of protest smote the summer air and grew momentarily louder until the echoes were rent with the sounds of wo.

Sydney Richards caught up his small nephew rather remorsefully.

"Oh, hush—for Heaven's sake! Come on, old man, get up to your room and into some dry togs, then I'll take you for an automobile-ride. I guess I can tie you fast some way," grimly.

This happy inspiration met with instant reward in the surcease of sorrow.

A half-hour later, as Sydney painfully finished the last buttons of a fresh suit, he said:

"Want to make up for all the gray hairs you've brought to my honored head to-day?"

"Don't know what you mean," replied the youngster, with the calm superiority accompanying the knowledge of immaculate and strictly correct attire.

"You know Miss Holden, Raymond?"

"Oh, yeth," enthusiastically; "the lady wiv the big bwown eyes and the pretty crinkly hair!"

"Exactly," with satisfaction. "I'm glad to see you showing such discriminating taste so early in life. Now, listen to what I'm saying. I'll buy you enough candy to make you sick for a year if you'll go to Miss Holden and coax her to come for a drive with us. Tell her we want her awfully, and ask her if she can forgive and forget, and tell her I'm penitent enough to satisfy even her."

"All wite," and the stout tan legs disappeared in the direction of the "embroidery corner" of the veranda—their owner carefully conning his message.

He paid no attention to the endearments with which he was greeted, walking straight to the object of his search.

"Oh, you darling!" she said rapturously. "Were you looking for me? Are you lonesome to-day without your mother?"

"No. Uncle Sydney's going to take me dwiving. He says he'll forgive you for all your badnesses, and he'll take you, too, if you'll be vewy good."

"Oh, indeed!" with a sudden chilly change of manner.

A gale of laughter swept the assembled group, which they decorously tried to smother.

The course of true love, toward which Sydney Richards was trying to steer Miss Holden, was proverbially unsmooth—and, with the intuitive perception of such bodies, the guests at the Laurel House were entirely aware that there had recently been an unusually violent upheaval of the waters.

Miss Holden rose quickly, pushing the boy from his embrace of her knees.

"Go and tell your uncle I appreciate his delightful invitation, and regret that quite too many other important things will prevent my acceptance."

The boy paused uncertainly, evidently trying to reconcile the icy, mocking sweetness of her voice with the purport of the words.

"You can't come wiv us?" he asked.

"Couldn't think of it," she answered promptly, driving back tears of rage and mortification.

"All wite. I hope I'll get the candy, though!"

The frank admission of bribery called forth more laughter, and he beat a hasty and shamed retreat.

Carol Holden fled to her room, and there faced her tearful image in the mirror.

"Don't you dare to cry!" she said to the flushed, pretty face. "How can you think he is worthy of a single tear? It *was* his fault. And to send *such* a message!"

The slight incoherency of her speech didn't trouble her. She turned toward the window, through which came the "chug-chug" of Richards's machine as he brought it out of the garage.

Her own car had been ordered an hour ago, and stood uncomplainingly awaiting the caprice of its owner.

Carol gloried in the big white mass which seemed so inert but sprang so quickly to a thing of life. It gave her a sense of power to note its swift obedience to her lightest touch.

The white machine and its owner with the pretty "crinkly" hair had become a familiar sight to the people for miles around the fashionable summer resort.

Sydney protested that she should not drive alone, while she retorted that her father and the chauffeur considered her entirely competent.

"But you—no woman knows what to do in a crisis," Richards returned. "Suppose something happens—you'd probably sit up there and shriek, or else faint helplessly."

And Carol took umbrage at his words, not stopping to consider that they were prompted by solicitude for her welfare.

After that she seemed to try all man-

ner of hair-raising spectacular stunts when she thought Sydney's eye was upon her.

The breach widened, and Sydney made some scathing remarks about the independent latter-day woman which were better left unsaid.

And every one of them, with a few embellishments, was dutifully brought to her attention.

It may have been a slight twinge of muscular rheumatism which assailed her insistently healthy person—or it may have been compunction of conscience—which made her shrink for a moment as she noted now how excessively and unnecessarily handsome Sydney was—strong, alert, and with a fascinating air of exacting prompt and unquestioning obedience from every one but his irrepressible nephew.

Had she flaunted her independence too freely? Perish the thought, in these enlightened days!

Carol smiled suddenly through the tears of chagrin as she saw Sydney carefully form a noose in a stout line, evidently confiscated from the laundry, and slip it over Raymond's curly head and down to his waist, then fasten it so securely as to preclude any possibility of the child becoming separated from the automobile except by an earthquake.

The machine was cranked up, and Sydney was about to step in and start, when, glancing toward the side porch, he noted that the cook's baby had crawled unnoticed from the kitchen door to the very verge of the veranda.

Quick as thought he dashed to the rescue.

"Wait, Raymond! Don't move, and don't touch anything!" he called back as he ran.

"As if the poor child could do any mischief if he wanted to!" thought Carol, divided between amusement and indignation, as the position of her window prevented her from seeing what had caused Sydney to tear off so crazily. "My, what a time Syd is having to-day! Oh, my goodness!"

She turned and fled down the back stairway, across the veranda and lawn, toward the garage.

"Oh, Raymond, don't! Quick, Sydney, come!"

But it was too late.

Sydney's big car moved slowly out of the entrance-gates and down the road.

Raymond, a small masculine edition of Pandora, had played with the fascinating machinery, until by some strange mischance he pulled over the reverse-lever and started the car.

Now he was amazed and terror-stricken at the effect of his disobedience. Uncle Sydney had said "Don't touch anything," but, with his usual happy-go-lucky disregard of unpleasant commands, he *had* touched something.

An agonized shriek rose to high Heaven, and the people on the verandas and the tennis-courts and the golf-links were shocked at the flying car with no occupant but the screaming child.

With blanched faces the women looked at the men, who gazed back at them with whitening lips.

But the maroon car had hardly gained the open road when Carol Holden was in her own and starting in pursuit. The men gave a cheer as the white motor flashed by, and they quickly recognized her intention of intercepting the runaway.

"But they'll both be killed!" wailed Norma Weston.

"Hush—here comes Sydney!"

They were quiet as Sydney dashed by, though how he hoped to overtake on foot the fleet machines none stopped to explain.

Sydney drew a gasping, sobbing breath as he pictured what might happen. His sister would never forgive him—indeed, she would not survive the death of her child. And there was Carol, too, in danger. He would be a triple murderer!

Ahead of him the white car seemed leaping to fresh activity.

Carol had not tried to overtake the other while on the hill. By a miracle it had evaded everything which would have thrown it from its course. But the lake was ahead!

Then Carol put on more speed, and, was presently abreast of the runaway.

"Turn the little handle on the wheel in front of you, Raymond," she called clearly and as calmly as possible. "Turn it! Quick, dear!"

The frightened child tried to obey.

The wonder of it would never cease, but as Sydney waited to see the automobile plunge into the lake, its speed suddenly slackened, and he realized that Raymond had succeeded in shutting off the gasoline.

However, the machine did not stop—its momentum and the slight incline of the road would carry it perilously near the water, if indeed it did not launch itself bodily into the lake.

Another moment and Carol put on more speed, and drew quickly ahead of the maroon car.

Sydney saw her plan, and called in agony:

"Oh, Carol, don't, don't! You'll be killed!"

But she didn't hear him, and wouldn't have heeded him if she had. She was in a state of exaltation, her whole being concentrated on the intent to stop the runaway machine.

And she did!

The impact of the cars was rather heavy, though the power was shut off both. The white one, being a trifle lighter, recoiled as they came to a final stop, and Carol was thrown high in the air.

Being unable to get separated from his seat, Raymond perforce remained in the car, which, singularly, did not overturn, but stopped its meteoric career with a jerk that brought his small teeth clashingly together.

Sydney reached them first—then the other men breathlessly arrived.

Being assured that Raymond would live to tell the tale, Sydney knelt by Carol, who just then opened her eyes and smiled at him.

"A girl never knows what to do in a crisis," she murmured.

"Forgive me, darling!" he begged, lifting her tenderly. "Oh, say you will!"

"For Raymond's sake," she yielded, with enchanting teasing.

Some of the other men had loosened the boy from his unfortunate predicament.

"Raymond, come here and thank your new aunt for saving your worthless life," his uncle commanded.

"All wite," the rascal nonchalantly acquiesced.

GORDON'S GETAWAY.*

By STEPHEN BRANDISH,

Author of "When Suspicion Struck Hard," "At the Mercy of the Unseen," etc.

Certain astounding happenings that arose from the chance translation of a cipher into sense.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROAD TO SILAS.

RUSSELL'S wildly excited words choked in his throat. The face above him in the engine changed to a grim smile. A hand reached down and hoisted him to the level of the cab, and his ears were blessed with:

"Well, since yer so darned set on ridin', ride, then! It's at yer own risk! Climb up on that there locker and keep out of the way, and—"

The driver's voice was drowned in the renewed snorting of the engine. Steam hissed violently, here, there, and everywhere; the door of the fire-box opened and sent up a glare, even in the sunshine.

The engine puffed the harder, as it took the short grade. The wheels spun more rapidly, and still more rapidly; the stalled train, apparently, began to rush away from them behind.

And then they topped the ridge and slid down the other side, and the line of cars vanished altogether. The stenographer hitched to a more comfortable position on the locker and relieved himself of a delighted yell.

With over five thousand dollars in his pocket, two minutes of real opportunity had served to accomplish his escape!

At another time, perhaps, and under other conditions, Russell would have been wholly absorbed in the novelty of his experience.

The big engine was now gathering speed very rapidly, and, with no load behind her, took to swaying in a rather startling fashion. The great banks, the upper parts of endless bare trees, swirled quickly by. Now and then the whistle blew for a crossing; ever and anon the fire-box opened and set the place ablaze with light again.

The stenographer hardly noticed it

all; one great, grand fact stood forth beyond all other things—he was free! Not only free, but his captors were safely behind him for a matter of hours, until the distant wrecking outfit should appear and free them.

His anger rose slowly as he thought of the indignities that had been put upon him in the last fourteen or fifteen hours, and with it came the desire for revenge.

Apart from himself, too, he seemed fully justified in taking what revenge he could. Through Carford's kindness, he had pieced together a very fair idea of what was afoot, and he divined that in plain English it might have been called swindling.

What the mysterious "engine" might be, he could no more than guess; as to its value, however, the mere fact of three such men taking a jaunt into the backwoods of Maine seemed to establish it as unquestionably high. And they, able to invest millions, were seemingly upon the road to swindle the ever-present "Silas."

The thought of the name caused Russell to start, and sent his mind back an hour or so.

One hand went into his pocket and brought forth a slip, and, steadying himself, he held it to the window and read, in a round, scrawling chirography:

Silas T. Wigson, Downs River. Take stage from Sandboro.

That, at least, was definite enough in all conscience. It was also, perhaps, of value to the possessor.

Oblivious of the whistling wind without, the cinders overhead, the hot boiler beside him, the rocking cab, the bare woods, the isolated houses here and there, the Belmere's public stenographer pondered deeply.

And when at last he looked up, it was to find the engine slowing down hurried-

* Began April ARGOSY. Single copies 10 cents.

ly and the driver looking at him rather curiously; and his suddenly animated face must have betrayed much, for the grimy one chuckled hoarsely:

"Here's Trowbridge, son. You look sorter tickled!"

"Tickled!" Russell gasped. "See here, if I get what I'm going after, I'll see that you get a four-figure check for this."

"What!"

The engine rolled slowly down through the little settlement toward the station. Russell moistened his lips and grinned.

"Where's Sandboro?" he queried.

"Eh? Oh, a couple o' hours down from the junction, mister. Why? Want to get there?"

"About as badly as any man ever wanted to do anything."

"Waal—" The engineer nodded.

"See here! When you have sent your wire and I've sent mine, could you take me to the junction in time to make the train?"

"In this here engine?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I guess not, son," the engineer grinned. "I'll be held here for orders, anyway, even if I dared do it on my own hook. Most likely I'll have to wait to hear from the old man, and that'll mean waiting to help haul the wrecking train up the grade again."

Russell's fingers twitched about his little roll of bills.

"Couldn't you possibly—"

"No way under the sun, mister, unless you can persuade 'em at headquarters to make this a special engine for your own use—and produce the price on the spot; and by the time it was arranged, your train'd be gone, anyway."

He turned away hurriedly, to shut the throttle and throw on the air. The stenographer perceived that they had arrived at Trowbridge's not altogether palatial station.

The engineer was down in a twinkling, and Russell followed him into the little room, with its combination ticket-information-telegraph-baggage window.

He watched his savior catch up telegraph-blank and pencil, and he followed suit quickly. He poised his pencil and thought for an instant. Then, ready to be ticked to New York, he scribbled:

Here, well and wealthy. Will be home, if possible, by to-morrow or day after. Don't worry.

He shoved it through the window and received his change. He waited until his engineer-friend had filed his own message and passed the time of day with the operator.

Then, separating him deftly from the curious crowd which began to gather around him to learn of the train's non-appearance, he drew him to the platform without.

"Isn't there any way that I can make that afternoon train for Sandboro?" he demanded bluntly.

The engineer puckered his brow, as he drew forth his pipe and lighted it thoughtfully.

"Not at the junction, anyway," he vouchsafed.

"But can't I—"

"Say, ye might—I don't say ye could; but ye *might*—make her at Walford, if ye had a rig t' get over in. That's two stops above the junction."

"Then, is there a livery-stable or—"

The driver left his side suddenly and trotted to the end of the platform. A light sleigh was there, harnessed to a powerful young bay. Beside it, a well-bundled figure was stowing away a bag of flour, and the engineer slapped him upon the shoulder with:

"Goin' over Walford way, Pete?"

"Hey?" The other straightened up and stared. "'Lo, Tom!"

"Young chap here wants t' make the one-three there. Can you take him?"

The countryman straightened further and regarded Russell keenly. *Here* was something from the city!

"It's you that wants t' go, mister?"

"Yes. Can you get me there in time?"

"I dunno. 'Bout even chances, I guess. But I'll tell you this, mister. It's goin' t' cost you all o' five dollars if I hurry that hoss this sort o' weather."

The green bill was under his nose almost as he finished speaking. The much-wrapped farmer pocketed it swiftly and held up the fur robe with the other hand.

"Hop in!" he commanded. "Any baggage?"

"No."

The woolen comforter and coonskin

cap were beside him now, and the reins were being gathered up. A snap of the whip and the lively young horse jumped forward, startled.

An instant, Russell turned to wave his hand to the engineer—and simultaneously to remember that that person had gone all unrewarded. Then the sleigh spun briskly around the turn into the main road, and station, locomotive, and all vanished behind him. The second lap of his new journey had been begun without a sign of pursuit.

It was, at the mildest, a lively ride. Roads hereabouts, at least, were apparently wont to taste the luxury of the winter snow-roller, for they were level and hard-packed. The horse, too, seemed to feel the spirit of the thing, and whizzed them along at what seemed to Russell almost automobile speed.

Bits of ice and snow flew into their faces and kept their heads bent low; the nipping air burned the stenographer's cheeks, the wind choked off his breath.

His companion was a miniature mountain of silence. One mile, and two passed, and not a word had left his lips. Indeed, until they were far out of town he barely nodded, and Russell literally started when, entering a bare woodland road, he observed:

"Ain't another hoss in the State could do this five miles, mister. I orter charged you ten."

He relapsed into silence again, and the horse fell into his long, swift trot. The woods were left behind. They hurtled past a little cluster of houses, and into the open once more.

And then, when it seemed to the stenographer that twice five miles must have been covered, there came the long shriek of another locomotive whistle.

His driver jumped a little. His grip on the reins tightened, and the whip came down lightly. Through the trees a sign of smoke became visible. The driver shouted shrilly; his hard-breathing animal broke his gait and settled down to a gallop which threatened to overturn sleigh, occupants, and all.

And then, with amazing abruptness, they were alongside a moving train, the horse shied violently, and Russell, with the station in view a dozen yards ahead, leaped out and dashed for it.

In his seat, some fifty seconds later, he watched his late friend examining the five-dollar note dubiously. The train puffed slowly out—and he was on the road to Sandboro.

It was a ride of no tremendous duration, and certainly of little interest. Through the bare, snow-clad country he was carried again; he paid little enough attention to landscape details. Settled comfortably in the almost empty day-coach, he thought and planned, prepared for possible mishaps, cross-questioned conductors and brakemen as to the ways and means of reaching Sandboro from the spot of the wreck.

In the end, he felt a desire to purr aloud. He had taken the one solitary course possible, if Sandboro were to be made that afternoon—and Sandboro now was coming into sight.

Some half dozen bucolic youths waited about aimlessly in the cold as he stepped briskly down and turned up his collar—and, incidentally, wished that it might have been fur.

He glanced about quickly, until his eye lit upon a long sleigh and a pair of tired horses. He advanced upon it and demanded sharply:

"Does this go to Downs River?"

The ancient man in front looked up wonderingly, caught his breath, and surveyed the stenographer with sudden, amazed interest.

"Yessur," he responded. "Be you goin' that way?"

"Yes. When do you start?"

The old man's eyes were twinkling excitedly. He glanced about rapidly; he glanced at some two or three cases that had been deposited from the freight-car, and shouted:

"Them goin' over t' the River, Joe?"

"Nope!"

"Then, we're goin' t' start right now, mister," he announced flatly. "You come up here an' set by me. It'll be warmer."

Russell obeyed readily. The whip cracked, and the nags went off at a leisurely jog-trot, as mechanical as the working of machinery. Past the two or three stores they slid, and turned up-hill—and the curiosity that had been oozing from the man behind the reins broke forth at last:

"Goin' t' the River?"

"It seems so," Russell smiled.

"Stranger, ain't ye?"

"Yes."

"Come f'm the city?"

"Yes."

"Y' ain't one o' them cousins o' the Stokes boys?"

"No."

The old man sighed. Information did not seem to be coming easily.

"Thought mebbe ye had folks hereabouts."

"No."

"Goin' t' be with us long?"

"No."

"Where ye goin' t' stop?"

"I don't know."

"Mis' Wells's the best place. She takes summer comp'ny, sometimes."

"Thank you."

A rather sour expression came over the driver. For a mile or more he devoted his attention to flicking twigs from the dry bushes beside the road; then, in a restless burst, came:

"Guess business is bringin' ye here?"

"Yes."

"Lumber?"

"No."

"'Tain't nothin' 'bout that there trolley-line we been goin' t' have fer the last ten year?"

"No." Russell was forced to smile again.

The driver turned and surveyed him long and steadily.

"Then, you're goin' t' see Si Wigson!" he exclaimed. And as no answer rewarded him, he settled back with a startled, satisfied: "Waal, by Judas!"

The stenographer chuckled slightly, as they crossed the tenth mighty hilltop. Below, in the valley, several little columns of smoke told of a settlement.

"That's Downs River," the driver announced excitedly. "I gotter stop at the store with the mail, an' then I'll take ye right t' Si's place. 'Tain't more'n a dozen rods on."

Hill notwithstanding, he whipped up the horses, and they galloped and slid downward recklessly.

The level was reached, and the sleigh drew up suddenly before Downs River's lonely little store and post-office. The reins went round the whip with a swish.

The old man was out, and tugging at his mail-bags—and Russell was out before him and turning the knob of the door.

A gust of warm air greeted him as the door opened, and a blast of "haw-haws." A step forward, and there was revealed to him—and he himself was revealed to—the interior of the typical country store.

It was a queer medley: barrels, boxes, bales, bolts of cloth, candy, smoking-tobacco, shoes and hams, with a hint of kerosene in the air and the delicate aroma of snow-soaked boots against the red-hot stove.

Some half dozen natives were perched about as he entered, the driver, winking violently, behind him. He looked them over for a second or two, and singled out the man with the bare head and the cardigan jacket as lord of the outfit.

"Can you tell me whether Mr. Silas Wigson is present?" he asked briskly.

Funereal silence fell upon the staring group. Some twelve or fourteen wide eyes confronted him dumbly; a jaw or two dropped suddenly. The mail-bags fell noisily to the floor, and in a mirror Russell could observe the triumphant nodding of his Jehu.

It was the postmaster who broke the spell with choked words:

"Si—Si—Si ain't here much, mister. He—he lives down the road a piece. I—guess old Bill Thorpe'll take ye down thar."

"Yes, that's what I was sayin'—"

"Thank you." Russell took another quick survey of the group. "Can you tell me whether there is a lawyer in the neighborhood?"

A subdued gasp went up. From behind the stove, a long, elderly man untangled himself and stood erect, majestic and important in cowhide boots and knitted cap.

"I reckon, mister, I'm 'bout all the legal talent hereabout," he announced with grave modesty.

"Well—you'll do, I suppose," Russell assented. "Now, will you please—er—go to your office and get some foolscap and come with me? I have a fountain-pen, and I think it's full."

"Plenty o' foolscap right here, jedge," came hurriedly from behind the counter. "This here's Jedge Cox, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Russell is my name."

"Jesso. Judge Cox—Mr. Russell. Here's the paper, judge—that's most likely all ye'll need, ain't it?—an' I guess I'll stick in a blotter or two; an' mebbe ye'll want a pen. Si's got ink, ain't he? Or shall I—"

It was all taking time. Russell captured the lawyer's bony arm and, with gentle persuasion, was piloting him toward the door. Mr. Thorpe hobbled hastily after; and, as the door was closing, the stenographer caught a rasping whisper of:

"By crickey! Si wa'n't cracked ner lyin', after all."

A mingled hum went up.

"Yes, sir, Si's all right—jest's I always said he was," floated through the crack of the door. "*That there chap's the rich feller from Noo York!*"

CHAPTER X.

THE PRICE OF OPTIONS.

IN summer-time, Russell thought, it must have been rather a pretty little house.

There was a trellis at the front, and gray, hard threads of vine told of foliage climbing to the top in other seasons. There were bare, mighty trees, too, which hinted at grateful shade.

The stenographer, however, was hardly speculating on whatever rural beauties might be possible in this extremely backwoods section. Just now, if Mr. Silas Wigson happened to be at home, he had but one element to fear—the mysterious Porter.

What if he should happen to be with the inventor at the moment? Just what transactions, if any, had he had with him? And just what would Russell do if the engineer should happen to be present?

These, he concluded, were things that would have to be settled mainly by luck—and luck that day seemed to have remained with him. Scantly informed as he was, but armed with money and a fair supply of wits, he must keep on trusting.

His lately acquired legal adviser sat gravely beside him as the driver bustled to the rear door of the house, exchanged

a word or two with a comfortable looking middle-aged woman, and began to trot back.

"Si's out'n the shop alone," he announced. "You kin go right back."

The "judge" climbed down. Russell followed with alacrity. Their driver watched them, sad with longing, consumed with curiosity, as the stenographer's light shoes and the judge's heavy boots crunched their way down the little lane beside the house.

Ahead stood a solid wooden building of no great dimensions, with a short stack at the rear, from which trailed a thin line of smoke. Russell surveyed it for a second or two.

"That's Si's shop," Cox announced.

"Yes? Is this Mr. Wigson an easy man to do business with?"

"Oh, I guess Si's sharp as most of 'em, even if they *do* say he's cracked, sometimes."

"He has been working on his—er—engine a long time, I understand?"

"Land, yes. Ten er twelve years, Mr. Russell—ever since his uncle left him the house and the three thousand dollars, an' Si came in from the farm."

He chuckled appreciatively as he glanced at his client.

"And, mister, d'ye know Si believes he's goin' t' git nigh another twenty thousand fer that darned machine o' his!" he concluded in an undertone.

Russell nodded vaguely. With cheerful informality Cox opened the door, to disclose a rather grimy workshop—an affair of machinery and big tools, of lathes and benches.

"Si," he said solemnly, to the bent little man by the window, "this here gentleman is Mr. Russell, o' *Noo York*."

The short figure straightened up with a leap. The stenographer was confronted by a vision of iron-gray hair and beard, a face of typical Yankee shrewdness, with sharp gray eyes beneath heavy brows.

His expression interested the stenographer markedly, as he found his softer fingers gripped in a hard hand.

The smaller man was trembling frankly. His keen eyes fairly blazed with a sudden emotion, his cheeks were white behind the beard. His tongue appeared and licked his lips, and he seemed to

choke; for his dream had come true, and here was really a capitalist!

"I'm—I'm glad to meet you, sir," he said with difficulty. "You from—Mr. Waters, and them people?"

"Yes, and Mr. Felling."

The little man drew a long, quivering breath. His grip dropped away, and he gasped suddenly:

"Well, *there she is!*"

He darted across the room. Before the stenographer's somewhat startled, altogether uncomprehending gaze, the doors of the furnace opened, and red coals were raked quickly.

There was a glance at the steam-gage, a short, satisfied grunt. There followed the sudden panting of a small engine and the whirring of a dynamo; and across the dingy workshop a bank of incandescents flared out abruptly.

Below them, firmly anchored upon a bed of brick and iron, was—well, an engine. In the depths of his ignorance, Russell felt vaguely that it was different from any other piece of machinery he had ever seen, but how or why or in what degree he could not attempt to say.

"I'll have the steam for her in a minute or two, Mr. Russell," the inventor informed him. "You—you wait."

Tensely, picking nervously at his over-all blouse, he watched his gage and shifted from one foot to the other.

Slightly dazed, Russell drew near and waited. Judge Cox folded his arms and pursed his silent lips.

Then, apparently, something highly satisfactory seemed to have happened, for Wigson laughed aloud and set about twisting valves. Steam began to hiss. The engine moved slowly, began to spin around at high speed, powerfully, almost noiselessly, startlingly, no doubt, to one who was capable of understanding.

Wigson was speechless. Russell approached even nearer and stooped, and gave a really commendable imitation of a prolonged wise and appreciative stare at the thing.

He rose, at last, with a highly approving nod. A long sigh escaped Wigson. He reversed his valves, and, after a minute, the engine slowed down and stopped.

The thing, unquestionably, worked. It was about all that Russell could have told—or all that he cared about. He

smiled at the inventor as the latter dropped weakly into a chair and prepared for the mendacious effort of his life—and Wigson, unwittingly, gave him a grateful starting-point.

"Ye've seen all the plans before, Mr. Russell," he said. "I've tried mighty hard to explain everything on paper to Mr. Waters and those other gentlemen, and they've got copies of the patent and all that, but now—as Mr. Waters naturally said they'd have to do—*now* you've seen her work!" He gulped again, and his voice grew almost faint. "And what do you say to it, sir?"

"Mr. Wigson," said the visitor, stifling a slight smile which his sense of humor was prompting, "your engine is a triumph!"

"She's the only strictly rotary-engine in the world that'll *work!*" the inventor cried. "She's the only one that'll do everything a rotary-engine ought to do—and she's the first in the world to do it! She's taken me ten years to perfect, and it's been mighty hard trying to convince Mr. Waters that she really was worth putting a few thousand dollars into. But now—*now* you've seen it!"

"I have seen it," said Russell quietly, "and I may say that I am altogether satisfied."

"And she is everything I claimed for her?" Wigson asked eagerly.

A mental blessing upon Waters's invisible Porter, and the stenographer lied cheerfully:

"She is everything you claimed, Mr. Wigson. I have looked over all your—er—plans and specifications minutely, but I am bound to say that the actual operation of your rotary amazes me."

"And ye think Mr. Waters'll be satisfied with it?"

"I am positive of it."

The inventor leaned back, with a long laugh, so plainly excited that it bordered on the hysterical.

"Jedge," he cried, "d'ye see what that means?"

He shook his fist at the legal light.

"Darn ye! It means that I'm goin' to get her on the market without so much as drawin' in a cent o' that Hapley mortgage! Ye cussed me for a fool when I sold out that Brown mortgage, and ye were set on sendin' me to an asylum

when I foreclosed the five hundred on Jenkinson, but—now!”

His laugh subsided into a chuckle.

“Why, this here Mr. Waters alone said in his letters he could put as much as ten thousand dollars into the thing outright, if it was satisfactory, and the men he was associated with might even raise more, if they decided finally to buy the patent!”

The stenographer listened eagerly. At least, he was gaining details as he watched the gray-haired man with the gleaming eyes and the now flushed cheeks.

The inventor chuckled long. He ended by biting a section of plug-tobacco, nodding and muttering to himself for a minute or two, and finally facing Russell.

“I knew it, sir,” he mumbled. “I been knowing it all along, ever since I got the idea. People ‘a’ been calling mé an idiot, but I knew I was right. An’—say! There’s only been one feller in this town could see through a hole in a grindstone—and that one’s a stranger!”

“A—stranger?”

“Young chap named Porter, that’s thinking o’ working some lumber next year. He came up a month or two ago, an’ he knows a little bit about machinery, I guess. He said, only a couple o’ days ago, that he’d bet mebbe I could sell that air patent for as much as ten or eleven thousand dollars, if I worked it right.”

The stenographer nodded wisely.

“I’m inclined to think that he was right, Mr. Wigson,” he assented. “I—”

“Then, Mr. Russell, do you think Mr. Waters will close the deal?” the inventor inquired.

“I am certain of it.”

“And he’s coming—when? He sorter hinted he might be up to-day or to-morrow.”

“And he would have been here to-day but for circumstances altogether beyond his control,” Russell replied truthfully. “It is—er—rather doubtful just when Mr. Waters will be able to reach here. Therefore, he sent me in his place, you see.”

“With the authority to close the affair?”

“If your engine proved as much a reality as I have seen it to be,” said the stenographer. “It was for that reason

that I brought Mr. Cox with me from the store this afternoon.”

The elder man drew a long breath. Russell found a seat, crossed his legs, and leaned forward. It was high time for actual proceedings to begin.

“Now, sir,” he started, “I’m ready to talk business.”

The inventor hitched nearer. The village lawyer frowned ponderously, and also took a chair.

“Very well, Mr. Russell.” Wigson shifted his tobacco and looked at the other sharply. “But one thing I want to say in the very first place—an’ I hope you’ll excuse me for sayin’ it. Them original terms Mr. Waters proposed has to be held to.”

“I’m quite willing.”

“One thousand dollars down for a six months option on the sale o’ this here patent,” Wigson intoned. “Or, if you gentlemen want to buy a half interest, not less than five thousand dollars down and royalties to be agreed on. Or if you want to buy her outright, I ain’t to take less than ten thousand dollars in cash.”

“Those are the terms Mr. Waters made?”

“Them’s the terms, and there ain’t going to be no deviation, sir.”

The inventor blinked at him. Russell caught his breath, and wondered mentally where, if the patent was as valuable as it appeared, Waters and his friends differed from that fraternity which waits about railway depots in the cities and locates rural gentlemen known to be carrying more or less money.

He smiled rather queerly at the inventor.

“After all,” he said, “we may not stick to just those figures?”

“What’s that?” Wigson’s face fell.

“Mr. Waters, you see,” Russell went on evenly, “had never seen your invention, and any offer he may have made was only tentative.”

“See here, now—”

“Just a moment. I, on the other hand, having been sent in his place, with full power to use my own discretion, may be able to make alterations to which he will not object. In the first place, I believe that we shall purchase only a thirty days’ privilege on the buying of the patent.”

"Does that mean less money, judge?" Wigson demanded somewhat warmly.

"On the contrary," Russell smiled, "it may mean slightly more. Mr. Wigson, for the thirty-day option I mentioned, I am willing to pay you—four thousand dollars on the spot."

The man of machinery fell back, open-mouthed. For a full minute he stared at the stenographer's quiet smile. Then breath seemed to return, and his lips closed.

"Mister," he said sharply, "this ain't a matter to fool about. I can't say's I understand it altogether, but I can tell you I ain't goin' t' take any checks, or anything o' that sort. I'll have to hear from Mr. Waters direct first, and—"

Russell's smile broadened. One hand went to his trousers pocket and brought forth a little roll of green-and-yellow. He removed four of the bills and handed them to Cox.

"Is that good money, sir?" he asked.

The eyes of the legal light seemed to bulge. He fingered the slightly worn bills. He took them nearer to the window and examined them minutely. In the end, he dropped into his seat, and the hand with the money fell to his knee.

"That is good money, sir," he said.

"Thank you. Will that be satisfactory, Mr. Wigson?"

"Satisfactory!" A glow had suffused the other's face. "Say, if I could get hold o' Mr. Waters's hand an'—"

Russell's laugh stopped him.

"We'll call that part settled, then. There's an evening train for the junction, is there not?"

"Yes, but four—"

"Then, if you do not mind, we will have the papers made out at once, and I will endeavor to catch it. Judge Cox!"

"Yes, Mr. Russell?" The lawyer's paper was being spread out. The gaunt fingers accepted the stenographer's fountain-pen rather charily.

"Will you please draw up a document for us in duplicate? Primarily, it will state that Mr. Wigson, in consideration of the sum of four thousand dollars, reserves to me the right of buying his patent—you have the number—for a period of thirty days from date. My full name is Gordon Russell."

"Yes, sir."

"You will further state"—the stenographer stole a glance at the little man beside him—"that in event of my deciding to purchase the said patent, the purchase price shall not be less than—one million dollars!"

"*What!*" came from beside him in a scream.

"One million dollars, sir."

"But—"

"I am not insane," smiled Russell. "I am making a price which I believe to be fair and moderate, all things considered. Isn't it satisfactory?"

"Satisfactory!" Wigson rubbed his eyes. "Why, I—I—don't you—I mean—"

"I think we will let the figures stand, judge—and that is practically all, except that I would like a copy for my own use. Will you hurry, please?"

He himself was rather astonished at the calm manner in which he seemed to be keeping the transaction in a smooth path.

The judge breathed hard as he bent over. The sound of persistent scratching came from his table, and Russell murmured a prayer for his beloved fountain-pen.

For the inventor's part, he walked the floor incessantly. He muttered. He went to his invention and patted it and talked to it. He paused before Russell and stared at him incredulously.

"This—this Mr. Walters said—said that he and the gentlemen with him were—well, very moderate investors, sir. He said—"

The stenographer smiled broadly.

"You have Mr. Waters's full name.

If you will look up his commercial rating in either New York or Philadelphia, Mr. Wigson, you will find that he is fully able to invest one million or ten wherever it pleases him to do so."

"But he said—"

"He is cautious—too cautious, perhaps. That is all. When I have assigned this document to him, it will be hardly more than two weeks, I think, before the matter is altogether closed."

The new millionaire-to-be shuffled dazedly back to his engine and stared at it. The pen scratched and scratched and scratched; until suddenly the judge sat back with a sigh.

"That—that there's the most remarkable document I ever writ," he said soberly. "You'll have to get a couple o' witnesses, Si."

"Er—jedge, you go an' ask ma to send Jennie over to Knowles's, will ye?"

The lawyer drew his muffler a little tighter and departed. Wigson leaned against the back of a chair and stared unendingly as he muttered:

"It can't be true! 'Tain't so! I know—"

"On the contrary," Russell broke in briskly, "it is all quite so. And—Mr. Wigson!"

"Yes?"

"It may not be amiss to tell you privately that this young Porter is an expert engineer, who was sent by interests which are seeking to buy your machine for next to nothing."

"Not a feller by name o' Burlow?" the inventor demanded. "I got a letter from him, an' told Mr. Waters about it, an' he said—"

"Precisely!" Russell nodded emphatically. "Steer clear of him, Mr. Wigson! Steer clear, also, of any one representing himself as Waters, or any of the men associated with him! And remember," he ended impressively, "that once you have signed that document, you are absolutely bound to hold the matter entirely open for thirty days, unless the paper is produced, assigned by me to Mr. Waters himself. If you'll give me that pen, I will give you a copy of my signature—and you'd better preserve it carefully."

Cox, or perhaps the unseen Jennie, must have made haste. Hardly was the slip of paper tucked in Wigson's pocket, than the door opened and the judge himself filed in, followed by three sturdy sons of the soil.

They were panting somewhat and plainly impressed with the importance of the occasion. They waited awkwardly as Cox resumed his seat.

"First, you sign here, Si!" he commanded.

It was done.

"Now, Mr. Russell!"

The stenographer affixed his flowing signature once more, and stood to one side.

"An' now, I guess you gentlemen'd

better witness here, an' I'll attest the thing as notary."

The trio filed up. The pen was further abused. There was a crackling of paper, and Cox stood erect.

"Silas Wigson," he said weightily, "you are now bound by these papers, that'll hold in any court o' law, to sell your patent to this Mr. Russell within a month if he wants it. Here's a copy for each of you! Ahem!"

It was dusk now, as Russell hurried down to the road.

He had staved off an almost violent invitation to supper. He had declined, graciously and hurriedly, the Knowles's boys' offer to drive him over to the train. He had ascertained that old Thorpe, whose stable abutted the store at the rear, would doubtless "hitch up" and take him over.

And now, with his precious document tucked inside his coat, he was hurrying along store-ward over the hard snow, and humming to himself merrily.

There was a smile upon his lips as he glanced up now and then at the new moon. He chirped; he hopped almost. He paused at last, as he came to the last patch of trees before the store, and laughed aloud.

He could not resist another look at it. He drew the paper from his pocket and, in the thin light, squinted at it happily.

"It's all in good form, too!" he informed the still evening air. "It's all, all to the roses! And—"

He stopped suddenly. With magic speed a figure had slid from behind a tree and was close at his side; and an ugly voice demanded harshly:

"What's so darned much 'all to the roses?'"

CHAPTER XI.

AN OBJECTOR.

FOR the moment speech was fairly startled out of the ex-public stenographer.

He stepped aside a pace; a heavy hand caught his arm.

"Hold on! You're not going to run just yet!" he was informed.

"Well, if I do, I'm inclined to think that it'll be after you!" Russell replied

with sudden warmth. "Let go of me, and—"

"Cut it! Where are you going?"

"That," said the stenographer, "happens to be none of your—er—confounded business!"

"Perhaps it happens to be a great deal of my business. Have you come from old Wigson's?"

"I'm afraid that the last reply will have to answer that too. Just drop that arm, and—"

"Who sent you here, anyway, and what have you done up at the shop?"

The stenographer's free fist clenched, and he drew breath.

"My friend," he said, "whoever you may happen to be, I'm not in line for a cross-examination. Unless you drop that arm, and get out of my way, there's going to be a considerable muss, right here and now!"

"Bosh!"

The grip tightened, and Russell was whirled about. And feeling the muscle of the arm behind the hand, he was bound to concede mentally that possibly there was something in that "bosh!"

But if the stranger was looking him over, he also was inspecting the stranger now, and a momentary suspicion seemed confirmed.

The face before him was by no means pleasing. Belonging to a man perhaps thirty-five, the jaw was too square for comfort, the eyes were altogether too close together to warrant implicit confidence, and they were looking from deep sockets now in a manner far from reassuring.

The whole mien, too, was distinctly ugly; and, despite the rural garb, there existed a very strong suggestion of the man of the world.

The stenographer smiled slightly.

"Well, Mr. Porter?"

"Eh? You know me, do you?"

"I haven't that honor, and I don't want it. I based the conclusion merely on the fact that you're trying to look like a born hayseed, and not succeeding at all."

"Then—"

The engineer stopped short.

"Who sent you here?"

"I don't know that I am forced to answer that."

"Well, you'd better."

The stenographer considered for an instant.

"A Mr. Waters, of New York and Philadelphia."

"Then—"

He stopped again, and seemed to be waiting for something. A pause of twenty seconds, and he laughed aloud.

"You lie!" he announced pleasantly.

"I—"

"Because if you'd come from Waters, you'd have filled out the sentence after that 'then!'" snapped the engineer.

He gnawed his mustache for a minute or two, his grip on the stenographer never relaxing. Then:

"You're Burlow's man, eh?"

"I am not!"

"And you've come here to try a whack at Wigson—and it's not going to work!"

"Ah?"

"See here! It's all around this devilish little hole—has been for ten or fifteen minutes—that you've arrived from New York to buy Wigson's patent. Some of 'em say you've done it."

"Do they?"

"Now, you take a straight tip from me. *Don't monkey with him!* It doesn't go. I'm on the job here, in Waters's interest, not only to look over the thing, but to keep off poachers. Is that clear?"

"Charmingly lucid."

"And I'm able to take care of the job, and I've got money enough behind me to eat up fifty carloads of men like Burlow. You're wise to that, also?"

"I hear you."

"Then we can come down to business quick. If you've made that old lobster sign anything, pass it out."

The belligerent air had been scratching more and more markedly upon Russell's nerves. Now the aggressive attitude seemed to have taken altogether too definite a trend, and his temper surged up.

"It's just possible that I may ask you to go to the devil and find out whether he's signed anything or not!" he began.

"And it's just possible I won't have to. One of those Knowles's clouts landed at the store five minutes ago, and said he'd witnessed something or other in the shop. He said Cox had drawn it up, and a stranger was the other party to the signing. You're the stranger, and the only

one that's struck here in a month. Therefore, pass it out!"

For answer Russell wrenched his arm free and stood back.

"Porter," he cried, somewhat injudiciously, "put down those hands! I'm going on, and I'm going if I have to thrash you or bring the town out—or both!"

The other leaped into his path. He, too, seemed to have warmed thoroughly.

"Give me that paper, whatever fool thing it is!"

"I'll give you nothing! Get out of the road!"

For an instant, as he caught the muscular lines of the other's figure, it occurred to Russell that a far safer plan might be to dart by and run for the store.

He buttoned his inner coat; he crouched, and the other was upon him!

Well, it had come to a fight! As such, the stenographer determined, in a twinkling, it should be as good a one as his fists were capable of creating.

A ham-like affair shot toward his head. He ducked swiftly, and ducked again as another swing came toward him. He rose as swiftly, and contrived to land a stinging blow upon the other's jaw.

The man reeled for the instant. Russell followed—stepped past a trip-hammer jab—struck out—found his right hand blocked suddenly, and managed to bring the other stunningly between Porter's eyes!

The other man dropped flat. A laugh escaped Russell; he would never have suspected that the lessons of his boxing days could have survived so well! Scarce one minute of conflict, and his path was clear!

Or was it?

Porter seemed to have recovered amazingly. A backward push, and he was on his feet. Forward he came again, and Russell's breath left him suddenly as a blow caught his chest. He leaped backward and gasped.

Half dazedly, for the moment, he watched Porter fumbling behind him, approaching with only one hand in action. Well, it was no time to pause now. Russell, recovering from the shock, plunged forward again and succeeded in breaking the guard, and—

And what was that above his head?

What was the little black thing that had appeared suddenly in Porter's hand and was raised now, high in the air? Just what—

Straight before his eyes, as he opened them and stared dully from their aching depths, was the black sky of full night, bespecked here and there and everywhere with cold stars, illuminated gorgeously to the right by the moon, filtering through dry branches.

And why—why— What had happened?

He was stiff and sore, and his head ached badly; more than that, for the time, Russell could not tell. He was cold, too, and everything about him seemed cold.

He ran an uncertain hand over his person. In the bitter chill of the winter night, even his inner coat was unbuttoned and damp with snow.

How—what was the matter?

His head began to clear. He had met Porter; yes, and he had had an argument with him, and they had fought. And—and that queer thing that had appeared in his hand, just before matters ceased to be, must have been a club or a black-jack, or something of the sort!

And now he was lying here in the snow, probably somewhere near the road, and his coat was wide open—and Russell sat upright.

His option?

One hand was thrust into his inside pocket. Panting, he looked over the paper that fell into his lap. They were all, all small—folded in the compact manner to which he was accustomed. Among them not a single long-folded sheet of foolscap appeared. His option had vanished.

With a cry he staggered to his feet, aching head and all else forgotten. His hat lay in the snow, half a dozen paces away. He picked it up and jammed it upon his hair with blind haste. He gathered his damp garments about him.

Forward he tottered. Yes, that—that must be the road, and—what was the tinkling he heard? Sleigh-bells? Yes, and—

"Help! Help! Help!" he shouted hoarsely.

There was a renewed jangling, a loud

"Whoa!" and the noise of a horse sliding to a standstill on the snow.

Yes, and there was the horse himself, and the stenographer leaped into the full light.

A gasp of joy escaped him; for there, in an ancient sleigh, sat Cox himself!

His mouth was wide open with amazement. An instant of hesitation, and he was down in the snow and clutching Russell wonderingly.

"What'n time did—" he began.

The stenographer seized his arm.

"My option—" he gasped. "It's been stolen! Porter knocked me out and took it, and—"

"Porter!"

"Yes, he—"

"Hold on!"

The old man paused for a second, and his words poured forth with sudden speed.

"I ketch on, son! That's why old Thorpe started for the Sandboro station with him, ten or fifteen minutes back! I s'posed Thorpe didn't know you wanted to make that evening train, and I hitched up and came along to take you over m'self, and prob'ly pick you up at the store and—"

"And you're going for the train?"

"I was goin' t' take ye over, I told ye, and—"

The stenographer was in the sleigh. The local legal gentleman clambered hurriedly after and gathered up the reins; and a very wise nod of his head reassured the stenographer unexpectedly. Cox seemed to understand!

His whip came down, and his long-legged, raw-boned nag shot forward. He tugged at the beast and brought him down to a trot of amazing swiftness, and the stenographer gathered the robes about him and settled back.

Traffic was sparse in Downs River at that season. Before the store, as they shot past, they could make out clearly the broad runners of the station-sleigh. It had left quickly, too, for the hoof-prints were deep, and hinted at a little preliminary prancing.

Cox grunted, and brought down his whip again, and for a full mile they spun along through the moonlight, with only a clear road ahead. Then:

"Sure he's got yer paper?"

"Certainly."

"Any idee which way he's goin', if we don't catch him?"

"Eh?"

"The down train an' the up meet at Sandboro, ye know."

"No, I don't know, but toward the junction, I suppose. He is probably bound for New York."

"Well, then—"

The judge's lips closed tightly. He took a fresh grip on his reins, and urged the animal to even greater speed.

Another mile was past now, without a sight of the pursued. Russell's first hopes began to waver. Surely, it seemed now, Porter had made good his escape, and—

"Thar!" came from Cox.

The stenographer stared ahead. They were on the last level now; they had but to take the half-mile horseshoe turn and they would be at the depot. And there, not a hundred yards ahead, the long old sleigh of Mr. Thorpe was standing, and a man had just clambered down!

The judge squinted hard, and a snarl escaped him.

"That's it! Son of a gun's goin' t' cut cross-lots, through the snow and everything else, and come down through the back of the town! An' he'll be thar fust to the train, too, an' we ain't got more'n a minute's leeway as it is—"

Russell's wits were whirling swiftly. From the vista ahead, from the handful of words, he seemed suddenly to grasp everything clearly, as he rose in the hurrying sleigh and watched Porter's rapidly nearing figure plunge across the fence.

"Why can't I go after him, judge?" he cried.

"Have ye the wind an' the muscle to take ye through that show, son?" was shouted at him.

"Yes!"

"And can ye lick him, if necessary?"

They were within a dozen yards of the stationary vehicle now.

"I—"

"Here!"

The horse was pulled in, and Cox had dropped the reins. He dived suddenly for his pocket and brought forth a long revolver. He thrust it into Russell's astonished hand.

"There's my gun, as constable o' this here region!" he almost shouted. "Go

git yer option, son! And when ye've got it, make straight across for the road, four fields over, and I'll try t' be waitin' there! An' when ye git into that train stay over night at the junction an—"

Russell was gone, in almost dazed haste, the pistol clutched in his hand. A leap and he had cleared the fence, and was plunging through the deep, soft drifts.

It was murderous work, at the very mildest. For the city-bred man, accustomed to his desk and his warm quarters, it seemed very near to suicide.

Yet he had Porter's tracks to guide him, and a mighty spur to stay him, and he made really remarkable progress.

The man he wanted was fifty feet ahead now—now only forty, as he cleared the first fence. Now, it seemed, he too was losing his wind, for the distance diminished more still, until there seemed hardly twenty feet between them.

Very plainly, he was depending upon Russell's very probable exhaustion now, and straining every fiber in him to accomplish that end; but—

"Stop—Porter!" the stenographer panted.

A breathless laugh answered him. Russell himself paused for an instant, aimed his weapon and pulled the trigger. A huge report split the still night, and the snow a foot beside Porter spattered suddenly!

A little shout of astonishment, and the man stood still. A plunge or two, and the stenographer was upon him, and the black barrel was in his face; and in the moonlight Russell's wild eyes glared terrifyingly at the other.

"Give me that option!" he roared. "Give it to me, or you'll never take another step!"

"I haven't—"

"I'll count three!" He pulled back the hammer with a click. "When I—"

He ceased speaking. The engineer's coat had been torn open very suddenly. From the pocket he snatched forth a folded sheet of foolscap. The stenographer clutched it by the edge, unfolded it with a jerk, took a single glance at the signatures at the bottom and stepped quickly away.

"Porter," he said. "follow me if you want to; but, if you do, I'll kill you!"

He waited for no answer. He turned ahead once more and plowed his way forward.

The snow was a little shallower in that next field, thank fortune! He made for it and, half dead for breath, crossed quickly. He found the open bars of the fourth, and plunged through them. He struck a slight grade, and all but rolled down it. He picked himself up at the fence and stared about.

There, far, far away, was the judge's sleigh, coming with evident difficulty. There, nearer at hand, were the lights of a dozen houses on this side of the track, and lights of many more in the distances at the other side, where lay Sandboro proper.

There, more than all, lay the station lights, and whistles sounded in his ears.

He could make it in better time than Cox! He shot down the road at top speed. He turned and made out the station itself, a dozen rods ahead. He saw two trains, too, stationary and panting, and—

Yes, that must be the one for the junction! In leaps, he fairly hurled himself at it. He gripped the railing of a platform near the rear and dragged himself aboard.

Some two or three noticed him with mild curiosity. The train shivered and began to move; and, with a long gasp, Russell leaned forward for, probably, his last sight of Sandboro.

And he dodged back quickly, and a choked, breathless laugh escaped him.

The up-train, it seemed, had brought passengers, for there upon the little station-platform, their faces frowning in the light of the oil-lamps, their collars up-turned, stood Messrs. Waters, Carford, and Ringdon!

CHAPTER XII.

A BARGAIN FOR CASH.

IN the dainty little square parlor all three jets of gas were burning brightly.

By the table sat Russell alternately reading and listening for the horn of an automobile in the street, and ever and anon smiling slightly to himself.

He was thoroughly trim and well-groomed again now. Well drenched as

he had been twenty-four hours back, a roaring hot bath at the junction hotel, a sound meal afterward, and beneath blankets, seemed to have dispelled visions of pneumonia that might have had good enough ground in another hour or two.

The steam heat sizzled merrily across the bright little apartment; Russell regarded it reverently—it was part of his home! The cars clanged by the corner, and he laughed aloud. That, too, sounded very much like home, and whatever more elaborate shape that home might take in the future, he would always remember—

The clock struck eight, and he started. A minute or two passed, and he was smiling fondly at a pretty girl in the doorway.

"They have precisely nine minutes more, Dot!" he chuckled. "After that—well—"

Somewhere in the rear a bell rang long and loud. The pretty little woman disappeared suddenly. Russell, with a violent effort at unconcern, returned to his magazine; but his breath was coming faster, and his hands were gripping the pages more tightly, and he saw never a word of the print.

They were due now, and it was unlikely that any one else would have started that authoritative ringing just then, and—yes, there were voices in the little corridor.

The stenographer stood erect, and thrust his hands into his pockets. A faint little smile came to his compressed lips as there filed into the parlor of his home Waters and Carford and Ringdon!

For an instant the three faced the one in silence. Then an oath escaped Waters, and a furious:

"There's the confounded hoodoo that—"

The stenographer held up a hand for silence.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said. "It is, I assure you, a genuine pleasure to see you here; but—Mr. Waters!"

"What?"

"I must ask you all, and you in particular, to remember that I have had some little taste of your rather peculiar methods before. I—"

"Eh?" Carford's eyebrows were up.

"And it would displease me so to have the calm of this small, but reasonably

respectable, apartment house disturbed, hence I have—er—provided, I think, against any such scenes as occurred night before last. Will you all glance in here, please?"

He opened a door at the side, to reveal a dainty little bedroom. There, in two chairs beside the smooth white counterpane, sat two officers of police, rather bored in appearance, to be sure, but unquestionably official of mien and powerful of physique.

They grinned slightly at the group, and Russell closed the door upon the odd tableau.

"It isn't the way I usually entertain guests," he explained suavely; "but such extraordinary guests as you gentlemen might prove—"

He ended in a shrug, smiled as he caught sight of Waters's face, and added:

"And there is a telephone down-stairs, gentlemen, too, and I presume that it would be possible to have a hundred or so of the reserves here in a short time, if it should be necessary. You *will* try to be gentle, Mr. Waters?"

The millionaire vouchsafed no more reply than a grunt. He dropped his hat upon the table, and himself upon a chair.

He leaned back and crossed his legs, and waited until the others had followed suit; and the expression of his large countenance lacked the smallest sign of amiability.

They were seated, then, and Russell drew a chair to the table and sat down himself with a contented smile.

"Well, gentlemen," he began, "I thought that, by leaving on the local milk-train at midnight, and heading for Partonsville, you might very likely make the city late this afternoon, as I did myself on the very early train from the junction. Therefore, I left my home address at the hotel, and information that I should be here from eight to eight-ten this evening, in event of your desiring to call."

Silence reigned. Russell smiled again.

"Well?"

Ringdon and Carford looked at Waters. That gentleman uncrossed his legs and leaned slightly forward, and his smile was ugly.

"Look here, Russell, this is all damned nonsense!" he informed the stenographer.

Russell nodded acquiescence.

"So it has impressed me since the moment you locked me in your bedroom at the Belmore, Mr. Waters," he said.

"And, as a matter of fact, our main purpose in calling here this evening is to regain that five thousand of Felling's," Waters pursued quietly.

"Really?"

"Yes. Hand it out, and we'll let the matter drop."

"And if I don't hand it out?"

"You'll be locked up for it—that's about all. Hurry up. We haven't the evening to spend here."

Russell stared frankly, and smiled a little. As a producer of sheer, barefaced bluffs, this Mr. Waters was a wonder. But there was something distinctly uncomplimentary to Russell's intelligence in it too, and the stenographer ceased to smile.

"Then, I'm afraid I'll have to refuse," he answered.

"Bosh! You've got a family to support, you fool, and—"

"Mr. Waters! That is, approximately, about the one-hundredth time you have given me that name, in a very short period. I'm going to ask you now to break off the habit, and I'm going to try proving to you that the term is wholly unjustified!"

The stenographer's eyes snapped a little. Waters broke into a sneering laugh.

"All of which refers to old Wigson's engine, eh? Well, you'll probably be mildly astonished to know that the thing, in actual fact, is a fizzle after all!"

"Eh?"

"Fifty such patents as his are not worth the four thousand dollars you're supposed to have paid for an option on this one. Therefore, young man, it's going to be your painful duty—and necessity—to hand back whatever sum of money you *didn't* pay him yesterday, and to make up the balance to Felling by whatever system of small payments Felling is willing to accept."

He paused, and the sneer grew deeper.

"Just plain 'fool' isn't so far out of place, after all, is it, Russell?" he inquired nastily.

"So that I really have gone astray on my calculations?" the stenographer inquired. "And I'll really have to make up the whole sum?"

"Precisely; and if you don't you'll sweat for it!"

The stenographer stared at the table, and a queer little smile played about his lips again. When he looked up it was to face Waters, with a subdued glare.

"My dear sir," he said quietly, "this sort of thing almost prompts me to abandon all else, go into training, and eventually fracture a few of your facial bones as part return for the mud you're throwing at my humble supply of wits!"

"Eh?"

"Oh, see here!" Carford broke in, and it struck Russell that his intonation was much that of a schoolboy who has learned his lesson. "I—I don't blame Russell so much, Waters. He did what—well, what almost any one else would have done. Five thousand isn't anything to Felling or the rest of us, either, for that matter. I move that if Russell hands back whatever paper, if any, he induced the old chap to sign, we drop the matter altogether!"

He nodded emphatically.

"If necessary, I'll make up my share of the confounded five thousand and call it off!" he added.

"But—" Waters stared at him disapprovingly.

"I'm willing to fall in line with the same arrangement, Waters," Ringdon supplemented. "We've spent too much time over this thing already. If Wigson *did* sign anything, the only harm it could do us would be in event of his perfecting his confounded fake engine within a month, and even then it wouldn't hold, for he'd have to take out a new patent.

"Let Russell pass out his document"—he smiled broadly at the stenographer—"and we'll call it all off, so far as he's concerned."

"But I don't see—" Waters began.

"Go ahead!" Carford urged. "It's the simplest and quickest thing all around!"

The big man turned to Russell with grim reluctance.

"Do it, then!" he snapped; "and thank your stars that—"

"Hold on, gentlemen!" The stenographer faced them steadily. "Hasn't the farce gone far enough now? I, too, have several other things to attend to this evening."

"Eh?"

"That option provides that the patent must be purchased within thirty days for a sum of not less than one million dollars, and a—er—certain authority informed me this afternoon that it was rather a low figure. A certain other authority, who is at present sitting right back in the dining-room and talking to my wife—and this one happens to be a legal authority whom you'll know—informs me that the option is perfectly good, and will hold like grim death in any court of law. In addition to this, even, I have filed a copy of it in the Patent Office at Washington."

He paused and surveyed them, and a keen ecstacy of enjoyment thrilled him.

"Therefore, gentlemen," he said, "just what are you willing to pay in cash for that option within the next fifteen minutes?"

The trio studied each other. Waters, backed by his mightiness, physically and financially, took a last try.

"Then your authorities are a pair of chumps, Russell," he said quietly. "We're not going to buy your option at any figure—we've no use for it, except to destroy it."

"Ah!" The stenographer rose. "Then I shall have the bother of organizing a little company myself. One of the—er—chumps has assured me that he will undertake to gather several millions for the project before to-morrow night. *Good evening, gentlemen!*"

He waited for them to leave their chairs. They seemed disinclined to do so. For a full minute there was silence, while Waters went white with rage. Carford broke the spell in a stifled laugh, and Ringdon bit his lips.

"You've called the bluff, Russell," said the jolly member of the trio.

"And since he has," Waters remarked, between his teeth, "I may as well go the limit at once. Russell, we came prepared to pay ten thousand dollars for that thing, if it came to the last ditch. Bring it here, and get your man to make out an assignment, and let's have it over."

The stenographer did not move.

"Ten thousand dollars, eh?"

"Yes, and you won't get that in another minute or two!" Waters snapped.

Russell rubbed his chin with a meditative smile.

"Do you know, Mr. Waters," he said sweetly, "that our ideas of values seem to differ widely? I—"

"You—"

"Now, I have been assured that half a million would not be a great deal to ask for that option!"

"*What!*" came in so violent a shriek that the bedroom door opened for a second, and a row of brass buttons appeared.

"And while I should be justified in asking that sum," Russell purred on, "and really would ask it from any one else, I feel that the assistance you gentlemen have given me in the matter is worth something. Therefore, if you'll decide, and act quickly, the figure will be two hundred and fifty thousand dollars!"

He came forward and leaned upon the table. His glittering eyes were fixed upon them.

"And if you want to buy that option for a quarter of a million, gentlemen, you'll have to talk some quick business, right here and now! Well?"

The silence fell again. Waters suddenly seemed to have wilted. The others, Ringdon in particular, frowned in more than mere annoyance. He bit his lips again as he muttered suddenly:

"You know, we're not walking mints, Russell."

"Checks or notes will be perfectly acceptable, so that I have several persons here to watch your signing of them," the stenographer replied, with a catch in his breath.

The big man was gathering himself together again now. His voice came in a very odd, choked fashion:

"You say you have an attorney on the premises?"

"I have."

"Then bring him here—damn you!"

"And you accept my price, Mr. Waters?"

The big man gulped. Then:

"*Yes!*" came in a burst of thunder from his corner.

On the shining top of the dining-table lay the pregnant little slips of paper which had occupied the center for some two hours now.

Russell tore his eyes away from them at last, and smiled vaguely at his wife.

"Think—think what it means, Dot!"

he said, almost dreamily. "The best education that money can buy for the youngster—everything for you that you'll ever want—"

"If I have you, my boy, I shall never want much else," came softly to him.

Their hands clasped across the table.

"And we can go abroad for two or three years, and I can study wherever and with who I please; and after that—"

His voice trailed away. He bent forward and kissed the hand he held.

The church clock at the corner was tolling the hour of midnight. The extenographer listened until the last note had died away.

"I remember, three or four days ago, Dot," he said, "just as one of the hotel clocks was striking twelve—it was just about that time that I dropped into that last idiotic fit of brooding, and began to growl mentally and wish for a more satisfactory state of things and a break in the monotony—"

He laughed aloud suddenly, and rose from his chair.

"And then," he said, with a long, delicious yawn, as he looked about the room and beamed upon every corner of it, every article within it, "then the monotony gave up the job in disgust, Dot—and fled!"

THE END.

A Quarter Million in a Hurry.

By HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY.

Here's your chance to make such a sum in a few months.

You need only one thing. What that is, the story will tell you.

"THE time was," began Collins, the retired patent-medicine man, as he settled back in the hotel chair and lighted a fresh cigar, "the time was when a man could get into the advertising business without the aid of a government mint.

"Why, when I went into the thing I had but twenty-five dollars to my name. I put ten dollars into printing and stationery, ten dollars into stamps and the balance into addresses of farmers, and started mailing them circulars, tooting the virtues of my medicine. And I didn't have a pill when the first order came in, either, but had to go to the drug-store and buy 'em at retail rates.

"And yet the orders poured in so fast that at the end of the first year I had cleaned up twenty thousand dollars and was employing a force of fifty men. If a man should undertake to get into the advertising business nowadays he'd want at least a million, and then there'd be a strong chance of failure."

"That depends on what sort of advertising you go into," said Reuben W. Boroughs, glancing up from the paper he was reading. "The medicine business has gone to the dogs, I'll admit, but there

are other branches left in which a man could reap a fortune."

"Certainly there are," answered Collins. "That isn't what I am trying to get at. I say it would take at least a million to launch such a business successfully."

"I disagree with you there, too. If a man used his ingenuity and wits and had a little cash backing, say about twenty thousand dollars, he ought to triple the amount of the investment in three months."

Mr. Collins grunted and the rest of the listeners smiled.

Reuben was well known to them all. He was a young man who had failed successively as a newspaper reporter, house-to-house canvasser, short-story writer, and he was now trying his hand at selling buggies for a local factory.

"Why don't you do it, then?" asked Collins sarcastically.

"Because I haven't the twenty thousand," returned Reuben crisply.

"But, supposing you had, how would you go at it to triple the amount of the investment in three months?"

"If I told you, then you'd know, too," answered Reuben, beaming wisely at his

interrogator. "I've a little idea of my own, that I have all figured out, and some day I am going to spring it on you folks—when I have the required capital."

"How about all that money your uncle left you? Why don't you use that?"

"Because I can't get it. As you probably know, the principal is held in trust for me until I am thirty years of age. I get only the interest until then."

"The principal comes pretty close to twenty thousand, doesn't it?"

"Twenty-five thousand."

"Why don't you borrow on it, then? You must be pretty close to thirty by now, and you ought to be able to raise what you think you need."

"I am twenty-five, and I would borrow on it in a minute if I could find some one willing to take the risk, which is small, considering that the principal is mostly in good real estate."

"And if you could borrow twenty thousand, you'd go into the advertising business and triple the amount in three months, would you?"

"Easily," answered the young buggy salesman calmly.

Collins was thoughtful for some minutes; then he said:

"You're so cock-sure of your ability to get rich quick that you amuse me. Still, just to take some of the conceit out of you, I'll tell you what I'll do. You give me your note for twenty thousand at eight per cent, for five years, securing it with this property you have coming, take that money and get into your advertising business. I'll bet you a thousand dollars straight, and take your word for your end of it, that you can't do it."

"I accept that offer," answered Reuben promptly. "Draw up your note and I'll sign it right now, and you can give me your check for the amount, providing, of course, you give me the privilege of taking up the note in six months," he added as an afterthought.

Several of Reuben's friends started to remonstrate.

Collins was known as an unscrupulous, scheming man, who would not hesitate to beat even his friends out of a dollar if he thought he could do so safely. However, Reuben would listen to no objections and he and Collins went into the writing-room of the hotel and closed the door.

The transaction was soon over and Reuben left the hotel shortly after, possessor of one of Collins's checks, made out for twenty thousand dollars.

He went at once to his home and shut himself up in his room, where he spent half the night studiously writing on sheet after sheet of paper, tearing each sheet up as soon as he had finished and perused it, to begin on a fresh one.

After many starts and failures he finally finished the composition to his satisfaction, and after going carefully over the last copy, correcting and erasing here and there, he at last folded the paper and placed it in his pocketbook. Then gathering up his other efforts, he carefully burned every scrap in the grate, and retired for the night.

His first act after he left his home next morning was to hand in his resignation at the carriage-factory. Then he hurried to the bank and cashed his check, leaving half of the money on deposit and tucking the balance away in his wallet.

He hunted up the owner of the old Hurd flour-mill, a huge structure which had been closed for several years, and rented it for four months at fifty dollars a month, paying down the full amount in advance, and asking for immediate possession.

This accomplished, he packed a grip and hurried to the depot, where he caught the noon train for Chicago.

He remained in the city for three days, most of the time closeted with the manager of a large advertising firm. When he finally concluded his business there, he left with the company eight thousand of the ten thousand dollars he had brought with him, and carried away a contract calling for that amount of advertising.

On reaching Marshville he went at once to the bank, and had a long private talk with the president of that institution, which resulted in his withdrawing nine thousand five hundred dollars of his deposit, and placing it in the president's hands together with sealed instructions, which were placed in the vault by the latter.

He then hunted up a sign-painter, and three days later there appeared over the office door of the old mill a large sign bearing the following inscription:

THE MARSHVILLE AGRICULTURAL EMPORIUM

REUBEN W. BOROUGHS
PROPRIETOR AND MANAGER

He then had the dusty office cleaned out and some fixtures installed, and settled down with a pile of magazines to await developments.

Naturally, these proceedings on the part of the erstwhile buggy salesman aroused the curiosity of the townspeople somewhat. The transaction between Collins and Reuben had become generally known and the former was being severely censured for taking advantage of the young man as he had.

The preponderance of opinion was that Reuben would soon lose what money he had acquired in whatever advertising venture he was sinking in.

One of his first callers after he had settled himself in his office was Collins. He came around one morning and stopped to read the sign over the door before entering.

"The Marshville Agricultural Emporium, eh?" he remarked as he came in and helped himself to a seat. "What is it? Some new-fangled plow, or self-acting hoe, or something along those lines?"

"Oh, you'll find out in plenty of time to see the whole show," answered Reuben wisely. "If I let you into the secret now you'd have another company started inside of twenty-four hours, and then I wouldn't get the whole pie—that's what I'm after."

"Oh, I guess you needn't be afraid of me; I've made all the coin I need and am out of the business for good. Better let me into the secret. Perhaps I'll be able to advise you; I'm an old advertising-man, you know."

"Thanks," answered Reuben dryly. "If I need any advice I'll let you know. I've been able to get along pretty well so far alone, and shouldn't be surprised if I could continue doing so."

"But you don't seem to be doing a very rushing business for a man who's got to clear sixty thousand dollars in three months."

"Don't you lose any sleep over that. When I gave you those figures I allowed myself what I believe is a large margin. If I don't clean up but sixty thousand on this deal I'll feel like I've done a poor three months' work. To be frank about it, I'd ought to triple that amount."

Collins grunted. "You're crazy," was his only comment, as he rose to leave.

For the next fifteen days nothing of importance occurred. Reuben sat quietly in his office and perused magazines and his mail, of which there was considerable, consisting for the most part of marked copies of papers and magazines, all of which he looked over and then filed carefully away in a desk.

He had many callers, who dropped in out of curiosity more than anything else, and tried to get some inkling as to the nature of his game. But to all he had the same reply: "Wait and you'll find out all about it."

On the morning of the sixteenth day the postman left, among the other mail, a package about eighteen inches long and somewhat thicker than a man's arm. It was securely wrapped in stout paper and addressed to the Agricultural Emporium.

"Business seems about to pick up," remarked the postman, as he handed the package to Reuben.

"It's about time," the other answered. "I'll be expecting several more of these packages shortly."

When the postman had gone Reuben carried the package, without opening it, to the largest part of the mill and laid it down on the floor in the corner. Returning to the office he tacked a large sheet of white paper on the wall, and made a short straight pencil-mark in the upper left-hand corner. Then he settled down to his magazines again.

The noon delivery brought three more packages, and Reuben quietly laid these beside the first, put three more marks on his paper, and returned again to his magazines.

On the evening delivery the postman passed without stopping. Reuben caught sight of him through the window, and after making sure that he was not going to stop, he laid down his magazine and knit his brows thoughtfully.

"Pretty poor start," he mused. "If they don't come in faster than this you're

due to make a big losing, old man. Maybe things will pick up in a day or two, though," he added hopefully.

When the postman called next morning he had eleven packages for the Agricultural Emporium.

"Sort o' coming your way now," he remarked, as he noted the pleased expression on Reuben's face.

"Yep; wouldn't be surprised if some more came in, after a bit," answered the young financier cheerfully.

He placed the packages with the others, tallied them up on the sheet of paper and then put on his hat and went up-town.

He stopped at the offices of the two leading daily papers and ordered advertisements inserted, calling for one hundred boys to work for him, at fifty cents a day and also one hundred men, at one dollar and a half a day, preferably farmhands.

Along the main street he picked up three boys, whom he hired, taking one back with him and telling the other two to report in the morning. When he reached the office he gave the boy a pile of magazines and told him to amuse himself until his services were needed, and then sat down himself to read and await further developments.

At noon the postman brought him twenty-six packages, and the evening delivery brought fourteen more. These he had the boy carry out and place with the others, and showed him how to tally them up on the sheet.

He had now received fifty-three packages, and after the postman had called for the last time that day, he did some figuring with a pencil and shook his head woefully.

"Begins to look a little dubious," he told himself. "We've got to do better than this or we'll go to the wall, sure!"

However, when the postman arrived next morning, Reuben brightened up again. He drove up with a dray, and it took him ten trips with a bushel-basket to deliver Reuben's mail.

He had a bill for three dollars and sixty-two cents, for postage due; the full amount not being paid on some of the packages. Reuben looked worried when he saw this bill, but he paid it without comment.

When they counted the packages the number was four hundred and ninety-eight. These were stored away and tallied up on the paper.

The noon and evening deliveries were still heavier and the day's receipts figured up to sixteen hundred and thirty-two packages.

All this day Reuben had been busy receiving men and boys who came in answer to his advertisements, and these he hired as fast as they arrived until he had two hundred on his list. They were told to report each morning until their services were needed.

On the fourth day a flood of packages came in that well-nigh overwhelmed the postman. He drove up on the morning delivery with his dray piled high, and it consumed fully three-quarters of an hour for him to transfer the load to the office. He had also a bill for eleven dollars and forty-four cents for postage due, which was paid without argument on Reuben's part.

The noon delivery was still larger, and on the last round the postman was obliged to make two trips with his dray.

"What kind of a game are you running, anyway?" he demanded, wiping the perspiration from his brow as he finished the job of unloading. "If this keeps up very long you'll have an inspector down here making an investigation."

"The game will stand it," answered Reuben quietly. "But you'll have to do better than this by me or the whole thing will be a fizzle. I'd like to see you double up on the income of mail."

"Oh, you would, eh? Well, if this thing gets much worse I'll hand in my resignation. I didn't hire out for a tote-team."

On the morning of the fifth day the cat jumped out of the bag, as it were.

An excited farmer drove into town with a huge ear of corn in one pocket and a copy of his farm journal in another. He inquired anxiously for the Agricultural Emporium and made a bee-line for that institution as soon as he had been directed to it.

"Who's the manager of this here concern?" he demanded as he bounced into the office.

"I am," answered Reuben, who was busy tallying up the receipts of the morn-

ing's delivery, which had been six dray-loads.

"Is this here advertisement correct?" asked the farmer, unfolding his paper and handing it over.

"It is," answered Reuben after he had glanced at the page.

"There ain't no catch or swindle to it?"

"No, sir. It is a straight, honest deal all the way through."

"Well, then, I want to enter this ear o' corn in the contest. I've been raising corn for over twenty year now, and this one's the biggest that ever grewed on my land. I'm thinking that she'd oughter win."

Reuben took the ear and read the address written on the label, which was tied to the corn with a stout string.

"Very well, Mr. Johnson," he said. "I will put this with the others and it will stand an equal chance with them. Hope you win."

The farmer asked a few more questions and then went up-town, where he spread the news, showing his paper to everybody he met. The advertisement read as follows:

FARMERS, NOTICE!

GREAT CORN CONTEST!

Five Thousand Dollars for One Ear
of Corn.

One Thousand One Hundred and Thirteen
Cash Prizes to be Divided Among the
Corn Raisers of the Country!

The Marshville Agricultural Emporium desires to obtain specimens of the finest corn raised in the United States, and to that end will pay the following prizes for ears of corn received:

One Prize of \$5,000.00, for the finest, largest and healthiest ear of corn received.

One Prize of \$1,000.00, for the second finest ear.

One Prize of \$500.00, for the third finest ear.

Ten Prizes of \$100.00 each for the next ten finest.

One hundred Prizes of \$10.00 each, for the next one hundred finest.

One thousand Prizes of \$1.00 each, for the next one thousand ears considered by the judges as out of the ordinary.

This is no catch-penny scheme to induce farmers to subscribe for a maga-

zine or invest their savings in a fake stock company. Our sole object is to obtain the corn, and *we have absolutely nothing to sell.*

The prize money has been deposited in the Marshville National Bank, and is there held in trust by the president of that institution, to be paid only to the lucky winners of the prizes.

The judges will be selected from among the best known and reliable corn raisers in the country, and will come from several States.

The only conditions are that each contestant have fastened to his or her ear of corn a stout label with the name and address of the sender written thereon. That it be wrapped, first in a thick layer of cotton to protect it against damage, and then in strong paper, securely sealed and with the postage fully paid to destination.

Remember, *these are the only conditions.* It costs you absolutely nothing except one ear of corn, and that ear may bring you FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS!

Farmers, you cannot afford to miss this opportunity. Wrap up your choicest ear of corn, as directed above, and mail at once. The names of the lucky contestants will be published in the farm journals of the country, and you may be one of them.

The contest opens on the first day of October and closes on the thirty-first day of December. All corn received after that date will be rejected.

Address,
THE MARSHVILLE CORN EMPORIUM,
Marshville, Michigan.

This advertisement naturally stirred up considerable interest in the town, and the mill was soon besieged with visitors who wanted to get further details of the contest.

Reuben was frank and cheerful to all, but would vouchsafe no further information than was contained in the announcement.

He had nothing to sell—as yet—and the prizes would surely be paid to the lucky winners, he informed them.

When Collins read the advertisement he was mildly astonished. He did considerable figuring, which resulted in his stating to several friends that he thought Reuben had made a foolish venture and would have to pull hard to break even.

When he visited the mill a few days

later, however, he changed his views to some extent.

Packages of corn had been pouring in in increasing numbers by every train; there were now three drays delivering Reuben's mail, and it occupied practically all of their time. The postmaster had been obliged to add several extra clerks to his force in order to handle the greatly increased receipts.

He had given up all thought of trying to weigh the packages in order to ascertain if there was postage due on them. It would have required a force of a hundred men to keep track of that branch alone, for Reuben's mail was now pouring in at the rate of over one hundred thousand packages a day!

About this time letters of inquiry from agricultural colleges and prominent farmers began to flow in. Reuben promptly hired twenty stenographers and saw to it that all of these letters were promptly and courteously answered, and in these replies were enclosed hearty invitations to visit the emporium and inspect the marvelous array of corn.

About this time Reuben started a system of sifting. First, he selected a dozen of the most prominent farmers from that vicinity, and requested them to call at the mill on a certain day. Then he put some of his help to work selecting from his huge and growing pile two thousand packages, covering as large an area as possible by reading the postmarks.

When these packages had been sorted out, he invited the farmers to come forward and open them and select from the lot what they judged to be the best twenty ears of corn.

This accomplished, Reuben hung the selected ears up in front of a long bench and stationed sixty of his men before them, three men using one ear for a model. Their instructions were to go rapidly through the corn, and compare each ear with their model; those falling below the quality were to be rejected, and those equaling or surpassing it were to be laid aside.

He now set nearly all the boys to work unwrapping the packages, instructing them to carefully watch each ear as they opened the package, and see that the label bearing the address of the senders was in its place and properly filled out. The

ears were then quickly passed on to the sifters, the rejected ears being carried to another part of the mill where they were thrown into bins, while the selected ones were carefully rewrapped and stored in another room.

According to the statistics there are five million seven hundred and thirty-nine thousand six hundred and fifty-seven individual farms in the United States. Reuben had estimated that he would catch one out of every five of these with his advertisement. He had not hoped for anything better; but the receipts had already far surpassed this estimate, and the corn was still arriving in carload lots.

An explanation of this was soon forthcoming, when it was discovered that not only were farmers competing for the prizes, but that all over the United States, men in rigs and automobiles were scouring the country for large ears of corn, and offering fancy prices for any that could be found. It was estimated afterward that for every ear sent in by a farmer, nine were sent in by these men, who were of all classes, from business men to gamblers, and were making a try for one of the three big prizes.

Even Mr. Collins visited his several farms and overhauled his tenants' stocks of corn in an endeavor to find prize-winners, and he personally delivered twenty ears at the mill, with his name or those of his farm tenants attached.

The press had awakened to the fact that there was something out of the ordinary going on, and representatives of the various city dailies were sent to Marshville to interview the promoter and to give reports on the enormous inflow of corn. As a result, Reuben's venture received an extensive amount of free advertising throughout the Union.

Reuben had ascertained the names of a dozen of the most prominent and successful corn-growers in the country, each from a different State, and had written them, requesting that they act in the capacity of judges, and offering each a fee of one thousand dollars and expenses for their services.

Ten of these responded, accepting the offer and promising to be on hand on the first day of January, when the final judgment would begin.

By the first of December, Reuben

found himself cramped for room. The huge mill was filled with corn to overflowing and he was obliged to rent other buildings in which to store the surplus.

By this time the number of ears that had passed the first sifting had grown to such enormous proportions that Reuben saw they would have to undergo another sifting. He therefore had two thousand of the first selected ears brought out and twenty of the best of these selected, and then set a number of men to work on the second sifting.

By the middle of December the receipts began gradually to decrease, and at the end of the month, when the contest closed, there was not more than a dray-load at a mail. However, after January 1, over fifteen thousand ears were received, some of them accompanied by letters stating that the senders had just read the advertisement, and were a little late about entering, but hoped that the explanation would let their ears pass.

These last ears, however, were dumped into the bin without being sifted.

When the day arrived for the judges to start selecting the prize-winners, Reuben had sifted the corn until he had but twenty thousand of the choicest ears to place before them.

And a wonderful collection it was, too. Never before in the history of agriculture had such a display of corn been made. Corn-raisers from every part of the country, attracted by the glowing newspaper reports of the wonderful success of the enterprise, were present to see the show, and the town was filled to overflowing with these men.

The judges found the task before them a hard one. To select one best ear out of twenty thousand was a problem, and it was a week before they arrived at an agreement.

During this time Reuben had kept the room in which they were working closed to the public; and no one was allowed to enter except the judges and several helpers, who assisted in handling the corn.

At the end of the week the judges announced that they had selected the three first prize-winners and brought out three enormous ears of corn, which were placed on exhibition in the window of the Marshville Bank, where they were viewed by thousands.

The first prize of five thousand dollars had been won by a Kansan, named Bennett. The second prize of one thousand dollars had gone to an Iowa farmer, and an Illinois man captured the third prize of five hundred dollars.

Reuben had checks made out to these gentlemen, on the day of the decision, and mailed them, together with letters of congratulation. He saw to it that the reporters were posted on this, and as a result the names of the lucky winners were published broadcast over the whole United States.

But the work of the judges had only begun; they still had to decide who were the winners of the remaining eleven hundred and ten prizes, which ranged all the way from one hundred dollars to one dollar each. This was not so difficult as the first selection, but it consumed ten more days.

During this time Reuben had announced to his friends, and particularly to the members of the press, who advertised the news broadcast, that as soon as the judges had finished the awarding of the prizes the corn would be placed on sale; not at the regular rates, but at a price it would be worth as the fanciest and most valuable seed-corn ever gathered together.

This was what the corn-growers from all over the country, who had assembled in Marshville in the last few days, were waiting for. They realized that this was to be the opportunity of a lifetime to get what was undoubtedly the finest seed-corn grown in the United States, and Reuben was besieged with offers for first selections from the twenty thousand ears that had been sifted from the entire receipts.

However, Reuben declared that all would have an equal chance, and he therefore engaged an auctioneer, who, on the day following the finishing of the prize award, opened the sale in the largest room in the mill.

The three prize ears were put up first, and the fast and lively bidding on these astonished even Reuben. They were finally knocked down to a gentleman from Iowa for the astounding sum of three thousand dollars!

This may seem unreasonable to some, but when it is taken into consideration that the man from Iowa was the pos-

essor of what was probably the three finest ears of corn in the world, and that the profits he would derive from the sale of the seed raised from these ears would be enormous in a few years, it can be seen that the investment was, after all, small.

The balance of the twenty thousand ears were divided into lots of fifty, or what would be approximately a bushel, and auctioned off. The bidding on these was lively and spirited, and when the sale was concluded Reuben was astonished to find that they had brought nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-five dollars, or nearly one dollar each.

Then the corn that had passed the first sifting was put up. While this lot was not in the same class with the first, it was nevertheless of a very choice quality, and the farmers were all anxious to acquire some of it for seed.

This lot amounted to about fifty thousand bushels, and was sold in bushel lots, bringing an average of five dollars a bushel. The sale of this lasted for several days, and by the time the lot was exhausted many of the out-of-town farmers had left for home.

And then the young financier found that he still had over fifty-seven thousand bushels of corn to dispose of. This, of course, was all splendid selected corn, notwithstanding that it had been too poor to stand a show in the contest. Every ear that had been sent in was of a superior quality to the average run of corn, and so the little farmers were glad to bid in on this lot, which sold for a much lower price than the previous ones.

Several breakfast-food companies bid in on this lot, also, and the bulk of it went to them. When the sale was concluded, on the twenty-eighth day of January, it was found that this lot had brought an average of one dollar a bushel.

On the last day of the month Collins received a note from Reuben, asking him to please call at the office of the Agricultural Emporium that afternoon, if convenient.

Collins was curious to know just how well the young man had come out, and was on hand shortly after dinner. Reuben, who was sitting at his desk quietly reading a magazine, jumped up as Collins entered and offered him a chair.

"I'd like to take up that note now,

Mr. Collins," he began, as soon as his visitor was seated. "I presume it will be all right, won't it?"

Collins looked disappointed. He had been confident that the young man would fail in his undertaking, and that he would hold the note until it matured, and then foreclose on Reuben's property. When he inserted the clause permitting Reuben to take up the note within six months, if he wanted to, he had had no idea that the young man would be able to do so.

"Yes, I suppose so," he answered reluctantly.

Reuben pulled out a pocketbook bulging with bills, and counted out twenty thousand eight hundred dollars.

"I believe that is the right amount," he said, as he handed it to Collins. "There is interest for six months."

Collins counted the money over grumpily, and then, taking the note from his pocketbook, he canceled it and handed it to Reuben.

"You're pretty smart for a young fellow," he said. "How'd you ever think this thing out, anyway?"

"It was all very simple," answered Reuben, smiling and picking up a paper from his desk. "It worked out with a mathematical certainty that was surprising. When I went into this deal I had it all figured out that if I should offer the American public a large sum of money in return for something that held but little value in their eyes, they would fall all over themselves in their efforts to get the money. I had this idea in my mind some time ago, but didn't have enough cash to carry it out.

"When you handed me that check I saw my way clear to go ahead. I contracted with an advertising agency to insert my ad in three hundred farm journals and papers, for two insertions, paying them eight thousand dollars cash for the job. These papers had an average circulation of seventy-five thousand, so there were forty-five million copies of that ad issued and circulated throughout the United States."

Here Reuben paused to consult his paper, and then went on:

"The result was 5,386,969 ears of corn. Taking it at an average of fifty ears to the bushel, this would bring it to

107,740 bushels. Out of this I sold three ears for \$3,000; I sold 19,997 ears for \$19,997; 50,000 bushels, at five dollars a bushel, brought me \$250,000 more; and the remaining 57,340 bushels sold for a trifle less than a dollar a bushel, or \$57,300. The wrapping-paper taken from the corn amounted to 673,371 pounds, and I sold it to the junkman at twenty cents a hundred, and that brought me \$1,346; the cotton used to protect the ears from damage amounted to 673,000 pounds, and that went to the junkman for fifty cents a hundred, or \$3,365, bringing the grand total to \$335,008.

"Now, then, I paid \$8,000 for the advertising; \$9,500 for the prizes, \$22,000 wages to men, boys, and stenographers; the judges' fees and expenses came to \$11,980; your note came to \$20,800; the

crating, draying, rent, postage and stationery, and incidentals came to \$13,730, making a total of \$85,008, leaving me a clear profit of exactly \$250,000."

Collins threw up his hands with a gesture of despair, and shook his head.

"It's too many for me," he said.

"It's all very easy if you're used to figures," laughed Reuben.

"Well, it's all ended right side up. You're a quarter of a million ahead, and I make eight hundred," said Collins.

"You lose two hundred, you mean," said Reuben.

"I lose—how?"

"Why, you haven't forgotten that little matter of a thousand dollars you bet me that I couldn't triple the amount of the investment, have you?"

"Oh! that's so," said Collins.

THE TIME LIMIT.

By **BERTRAM LEBHAR,**

Author of "The Isle of Mysteries," "When a Man's Hungry," "King or Counterfeit?" etc.

A disappearance which seemed to have no explanation but one which was beyond belief.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MAX CRARY is in love with Hildegard Crandall, but his father, Farmer Crary, wishes his son to marry Ruth Merriweather. So Max and Hildy prepare to be wedded secretly, but on that very afternoon Hildegard disappears, with a strange young man in an automobile. Mr. and Mrs. Macomber, the uncle and aunt with whom she lives, receive a telegram from New York stating that she has been married and will return home later. Max refuses to believe this and goes to the city in search of her. He obtains employment as elevator-man in the Victor Building, and one day, as his car is ascending, he sees Hildegard in the office of one of the tenants, Alfred Pennington. Max becomes so excited that he loses control over the car and allows it to shoot violently to the top of the shaft, for which act he is discharged. But he cares little for this, and rushing into Pennington's office, demands to know what he has done with Hildy. But Pennington indignantly denies that any such person has been there.

Meanwhile Marshall White, also located in the Victor and a professional detective, becomes interested in Max's story, and pays a visit to the Macombers, from whom he obtains important information. On his return White trails from Pennington's office a blond woman, who finally enters a brownstone house up-town. From a policeman White finds out that this house is a private sanatorium in charge of a woman doctor, and that a pretty girl has recently been brought there by a young man in an automobile.

CHAPTER XX.

A GOOD REASON FOR HASTE.

SCHOOLED as he was in the art of concealing his emotions, the detective could not refrain from uttering

a sharp exclamation of surprise as the policeman imparted to him the startling piece of information set down at the close of the last chapter.

The officer looked at him intently.

"By the way," he said, his free and

*Began February ARGOSY. Single copies, 10 cents.

easy manner suddenly giving way to an air of suspicion, "who the divvle are you? What have you been asking me all these questions for? You seem to take a great interest in that house."

The detective assumed a confidential tone.

"I don't mind telling you that I am a newspaper reporter," he said. "I noticed that place as I passed and thought there might be good material for a story there. I'm much obliged to you for what you've told me, officer."

"Now, look here," rejoined the policeman, "don't you go quoting me, or you'll get me in trouble; although, after all," he added confidently, "I haven't told you anything of any great importance, have I?"

"Of course you haven't," White cordially assented. "Don't you worry about my quoting you, officer. I promise you that I sha'n't do that. Now, I suppose you haven't seen that poor girl come out of here since that time she was brought in, eh?"

The policeman shook his head.

"No, I guess she's in there to stay for a time. She seemed to be fairly off her nut."

"You didn't catch anything she said as they were taking her inside, did you?"

"No, I didn't. She didn't say very much, but she just screamed and struggled."

"And you don't know what room she's in now, do you?"

"No, I don't. But see here, mister, you've asked enough questions already. Now, I always like to accommodate newspaper men, but it ain't any use asking me any more questions about that poor gal. I've told you all I know about her. From what I can see there ain't any story for you in it. She's just some poor girl that's gone wrong in her head. There's many such, I reckon, more's the pity. What paper are you on?"

"I'm on a Chicago paper," responded White glibly. "Well, I'll be going on my way, officer. I suppose you're right. There isn't any story to be got there. Good day, old man. I'm glad to have met you."

As he passed the sanatorium White's first instinct was to ascend the stoop and ring the door-bell, but he reflected that

if he did so he would probably encounter the blond woman he had followed from Pennington's office. He had little doubt that this blond woman was no other than Dr. Jarvis herself, for the appearance of Pennington's visitor answered the policeman's description of the woman doctor.

Such being the case, he was too cautious a detective to run the risk of being recognized by her as the man whom she had seen in the elevator of the Victor Building.

"A hasty move now might prove disastrous," he told himself. "I guess my next step had better be to interview Messrs. Borden, Brown & Condit."

On the corner he espied a waiting cab, and jumping inside, he bade the driver take him down-town as quickly as possible.

When he handed his card to one of the clerks of the big law firm he was told that Mr. Borden would see him immediately, and a second later he was ushered into the private office of the senior partner.

"Mr. White," said the lawyer, "I am glad to see you. I was very pleased to get your special-delivery letter addressed to our post-office box. May I ask you incidentally why you chose that roundabout way of addressing us, instead of communicating directly with this office?"

The detective smiled.

"Let me ask rather why you left such a scanty address with Miss Crandall's aunt and uncle? They told me that they had received a visit from a lawyer, but they could not tell me his name. All they could give me was a post-office box number, so I had to address my communication to you in that manner. I suppose you did not wish the young lady's folks to know that your firm is connected with the case, eh?"

"Well, there *are* reasons why we should observe the greatest caution in this matter," replied the lawyer. "But I don't think there was any great objection to the young woman's relatives knowing that we are interested in the case. The fact is, the clerk we sent out there to see them is an over-cautious fellow, and I suppose he thought it prudent to leave them only our post-office box number instead of our business card.

"So you have been in communication with Miss Crandall's folks already, eh? And you say that you are in a position to inform us as to the present whereabouts of the young lady?"

"I believe I am," said the detective. "I don't mind confessing that when I spoke to you over the wire a few hours ago I did not have the remotest idea as to the whereabouts of the young lady. My statement to the contrary was a shameful piece of fiction; but since our telephonic conversation, I believe I have succeeded in locating her."

"And where is she?" exclaimed the lawyer eagerly.

"You will pardon me, sir, but before I give you any information I must ask a few questions myself. Will you tell me what is your object in seeking her?"

The lawyer frowned.

"That I am not at liberty to reveal at present. I can assure you, however, that it will be greatly to your interest to produce her immediately."

The detective shook his head.

"Either you take me into your confidence or I must decline to give you any assistance," he said.

"That is unreasonable, Mr. White," protested Borden. "I have already told you that it is a case which requires the greatest caution. I see by your card that you are a private detective. I assume that you yourself must have many cases the nature of which you are not at liberty to reveal to outsiders. You ought to understand our position in this matter."

"There are urgent reasons why we desire to communicate immediately with Miss Crandall, who we understand has eloped to this city. All we ask of you is that you furnish us with her present address, for which service we will pay you handsomely. Later on, we shall have no objection, probably, to enlightening you as to the details of this case, but at present it must remain a secret."

"You will pardon me, Mr. Borden," said the detective, "but I don't do business in that way. I, too, am greatly interested in this case, both in a professional and a personal way. Perhaps it may surprise you to learn that you are wrong in assuming that the young lady eloped to New York. She did not elope. She has been kidnaped."

The lawyer smiled sagaciously.

"That is very clever of you, my dear Mr. White," he said. "But you will pardon me for saying that I know it is not the truth. Our representative, as I believe you know, has just returned from a visit to the young lady's home. Her relatives told him that she had gone to New York to be married, and that they expected to hear from her within a few days. He left instructions that as soon as they did so they were to notify us immediately, so you see you will have nothing to gain by withholding this information. We shall soon learn from them the whereabouts of Miss Crandall despite your silence, and you will lose thereby a handsome fee."

The detective smiled strangely.

"Evidently you are unaware of my reputation as a detective, sir," he said. "I had flattered myself that I was better known. Those who do know me will vouch for the fact that I never make a positive statement without being sure of my ground. I say now that Miss Hildegard Crandall was kidnaped."

"And who kidnaped her, may I ask?" said the lawyer with a sneer.

"It is in order to be able to answer that question to your full satisfaction that I must insist upon knowing the nature of your business with Miss Crandall," replied White. "I know that the girl has been kidnaped. I know that she is kept a prisoner in this city. I think I know where she is confined at the present moment. If you will confide to me why it is that your law firm is seeking the young woman at the present time, I think I shall be able to discover who is responsible for her abduction."

"At present I can only guess the reason for her being forcibly carried off from her home. I am confident that I have hit upon the right theory—but, after all, it is only a theory. I want facts before I act."

"May I ask for whom you are acting?" the lawyer replied. "Who has retained you in this case, I mean?"

"Certainly. I have taken up this matter at the request of the young lady's fiancé, a young man named Crary. She was to have married him on the very day she was kidnaped."

The lawyer appeared to hesitate.

"Perhaps under the circumstances your demand to know something about our connection with the case is not unreasonable," he said. "If you will excuse me for a minute, Mr. White, I will confer with my partners."

The detective bowed and Borden left the room. When he returned ten minutes later he was smiling genially.

"I have consulted with the other members of our firm and both of them say they have heard of you, and speak well of both your professional and personal reputation," he began. "I must apologize for having appeared to mistrust you, sir. They agree that under the circumstances there can be no great harm in acquainting you with the reasons for our search for Miss Crandall. Of course, it is understood that what I tell you now is imparted in the strictest confidence. You will see for yourself that if this information was noised abroad it might prove extremely detrimental to the young lady's interest."

The detective nodded.

"You can trust me implicitly," he said.

"Well, then, I will tell you first of all that we are acting in this matter merely as the agents of a Western law firm. This firm has discovered that Hildegarde Crandall is heiress to property valued at over half a million dollars. This property consists of lands situated out West. About a week ago this Western law firm wrote a letter to Miss Crandall asking her to communicate with them at once."

"And is there any particular reason why she must communicate at once?" inquired the detective.

"Yes," answered the lawyer. "That is the point I am getting at. That is why we have been called into the case. Not having received any reply to their letter, the Western firm became anxious and has requested us to find Miss Crandall and urge her to take instant action. Such haste is necessary. Unless she claims that property within four days from now she will lose every acre of it."

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT CAME OF THE RAID.

To the lawyer's surprise White received this information quite coolly.

"That is the answer I expected you to make," the detective remarked. "As a result of my visit to the young lady's relatives, I came here with a pretty shrewd idea that your business with her had something to do with an inheritance, and I also suspected strongly that there was a time limit involved."

The lawyer nodded.

"Yes," he replied. "The present holders of the land have been in undisturbed possession, I understand, for a long term of years. It was only a short time ago that these Western lawyers discovered that they were not the rightful owners and that Miss Crandall's title was good. Under the law of the State the present occupants will, however, have a clear title to the property unless Miss Crandall gets in her claim by the 23d of this month. You see, therefore, there is no time to lose. There is barely time for her to get out there in season to protect her interests. The lawyers there are helpless to move a step without her power of attorney."

"And may I ask who holds these lands at present?" said White.

"A certain railroad company has present possession. I understand that they intend to extend their line across the property, which is therefore of great value to them."

"And does this railroad company know of Miss Crandall's title to the property?" inquired White.

"I have a shrewd suspicion that they do; but if so, they are keeping mighty quiet about it. Of course, they realize that if their title is not disputed by the 23d of this month they are safe."

"I see," said White jubilantly. "I think I understand pretty clearly now who kidnaped the young woman and why she was kidnaped."

"You mean the railroad people, I suppose," rejoined the lawyer. "Do you really think they have dared to do it?"

"You will pardon me, Mr. Borden," the detective replied, "but as a corporation lawyer you must know that some of those concerns would dare to do anything short of murder, and I doubt whether some of them would stop short even at that. I can't say positively whether the railroad conceived the idea of carrying off this girl or whether some

outside party forcibly carried her off with the intention of demanding a price from the railroad to keep her out of the way until after the 23d. I have reason to believe that the latter is the correct solution. Tell me, did you ever hear of a lawyer named Pennington?"

"No, I can't say that I have," said Borden. "There are so many lawyers in this town, you know," he added apologetically.

"Yes, and some of them have pretty shady reputations," remarked White. "Among this class is this fellow Pennington. I expect to be able to prove very shortly that it is he who carried off this young woman with the hope of forcing the Western railroad to pay him a big sum of money, threatening to produce the girl as the rightful claimant of the property unless they accede to these demands."

"The deuce you say!" cried the lawyer excitedly. "Then we must get after the scoundrel right away. There is no time to lose. Have you enough proof in your possession to warrant us in causing his arrest?"

The detective shook his head.

"Not at present. We must first of all get the girl. I have traced Miss Crandall to a private sanatorium up-town. Undoubtedly she is being kept there against her will. I have learned that the woman who runs this place is a friend of this chap Pennington."

"Then we will immediately take the necessary legal steps for bringing about the young lady's release from this place," cried the lawyer eagerly. "Tell me where it is located, Mr. White, and I will have one of my clerks go at once to a magistrate and secure a search warrant."

"Let him obtain a warrant by all means," said the detective, "but I beg that having secured the right to search the premises, you will take no further step until I deem the time ripe to raid the house. A hasty move would probably result in this fellow Pennington getting away from us. I want to prevent that if possible."

"But there is no time to lose," protested the lawyer. "We must get the girl at once. Otherwise she will lose the property."

White wrote a few words on a slip of paper.

"Here is the address of this sanatorium," he said. "It is run by a woman who calls herself Dr. Jarvis. Let one of your young men go to a magistrate and secure a warrant. I suppose you have enough of a pull to be able to get one without any trouble. I shall be back here in an hour or so. Hold the warrant until I return."

The lawyer promised to do this and White went out. When the little detective reached the street he summoned a cab and drove to the Victor Building.

On the ninth floor he found Max Crarry still standing faithfully on guard.

"Well," whispered the detective, "what's the news? Has anybody been in or out of Pennington's office since I left?"

"Yes," said Max. "Pennington himself came in again about an hour afterward. He's in there now. Nobody else has been in."

"Good! You have done excellent work. Now I want you to continue on watch here, and if Pennington goes out I want you to follow him. Wherever he goes you go. Do you understand?"

Max nodded.

"Here is one hundred dollars," continued the detective. "You may need money. Whatever happens, don't lose sight of Pennington. Follow him to the end of the earth, if necessary. Don't let him know that you are trailing him if you can help it. Keep in telephonic communication with my office whenever you get a chance. If I am not in, tell my clerk of your whereabouts. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Max. "But what the—"

"Don't ask any questions. I haven't time to answer them. Follow out my instructions carefully. If Pennington attempts to go out of town, pick a quarrel with him and have him arrested for assault. Even if you get arrested yourself it won't matter. I'll be around to bail you out. The great point is to have Pennington where we can lay hands on him. I expect to have him under arrest by to-morrow for the kidnaping of Hildegard Crandall."

Max uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"He—the kidnaper of Hildy!" he cried. "But the fellow in the red automobile had a long black mustache. Pennington is smooth-shaven."

The detective smiled.

"Bless your rustic innocence, false mustaches are easily purchased," he said. "By the way, do you remember who it was in your village that saw this man in the red automobile carrying off Hildy?"

"Yes," said Max. "Gus Marlowe, the butcher's son, says he saw him, for one. Then there was May Hamlin, she saw him, too; and there were several others whose names I can get for you. They all say that Hildy waved her handkerchief to them as the automobile passed by."

"Good!" said the detective. "I will make a note of their names. I may have to send for them to come here and testify against Pennington later. They ought to be able to identify him, even without his mustache."

"But you have not told me about Hildy," cried Max eagerly. "Where is she? Have you found her? If so, please take me to her at once. I can't—"

"We haven't got her yet," the detective interrupted, "but we hope to have her safe and sound within a few hours. If you will follow out my instructions and prevent Pennington from slipping away from us, I shall reward you by restoring your Hildy to you and sending her kidnapers to prison."

With this assurance the detective left the astonished young man and returned to the office of Borden, Brown & Condit.

"Now, Mr. Borden," he said, "if you have got that warrant ready we will go up to that sanatorium."

"Here it is," replied Borden. "I will go up there with you."

They got into a cab and drove uptown. As they neared the street where the sanatorium was located White commanded the driver to stop.

"What's the matter?" asked Borden anxiously.

"We'll get out here," said the detective. "We'd better go to the nearest police station and get a couple of plainclothes policemen to accompany us. I happen to know that this woman doctor has a couple of husky colored men on her

premises. Even with this legal document we may have trouble in getting into the place without the assistance of the police."

They visited the precinct station-house, and after a consultation with the captain, secured the services of four burly officers.

Thus reenforced, they proceeded on foot to the brownstone house with the barred upper windows. White pressed the bell-button and a colored maid-servant opened the door.

"We want to see Dr. Jarvis," said the detective.

"She ain't at home," snapped the maid, darting a suspicious look at the four men.

Before White could say anything further the door was slammed in his face.

One of the policemen kicked angrily on the panels.

"Open that door at once," he shouted, "or we'll smash it in."

A first-floor window was opened and a woman's head appeared.

White recognized her instantly as the blond woman who had visited Pennington's office.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" she cried angrily. "What do you mean by making such a disturbance?"

"Are you Dr. Jarvis, madam?" inquired White politely.

"Never mind who I am. Go away from here, or I'll call the police. Don't you dare to kick that door again."

"We're policemen, madam," said one of the officers. "We've got a warrant to search your premises. Better open the front door, or we'll smash it."

"All right," answered the woman. "If you're policemen you can come inside. Why didn't you say who you were in the first place. Wait a minute and I'll open the front door for you."

She closed the window, and a minute afterward opened the door and confronted them angrily.

"I can't understand what this outrage means," she said with dignity. "But if you are armed with the proper authority you can come inside. May I ask for what reason you wish to search these premises?"

"Yes, madam," answered White. "I will tell you. We are looking for a

young woman named Hildegard Crandall. We happen to know that you have got her here under confinement."

"You are mistaken, sir," she replied. "There is no patient here known to us by that name. In fact, we have no young woman patient here at all at the present time."

White smiled dubiously.

"We know better than that," he said, and leaning toward the woman, he whispered in her ear: "You might as well give up. Pennington is under arrest; he has confessed everything."

The woman looked at him in well-feigned astonishment.

"I don't know what you mean," she said. "Who is Pennington? I don't think I have ever heard of the gentleman."

White shrugged his shoulders.

"Stand aside, please," he commanded. "We are going up-stairs. Here is our warrant to search the premises."

Stationing two of the plain-clothes men at the front door to prevent anybody leaving the place, White, Borden, and the other two policemen went up-stairs.

It was a big house and they searched room after room. Most of the rooms were empty. One or two of them contained patients, but these were either men or women past middle age.

They searched the place from cellar to roof. The woman doctor apparently had spoken the truth. There was no young woman there.

Mr. Borden turned to White indignantly.

"I don't see any sign of Miss Crandall here," he whispered. "You said you were certain that we should find her in this place, and like a fool I believed you. Now, we're in a pretty pickle. If this is a reputable establishment, I suppose they've got a fine damage suit against us."

White scowled.

"Damage suits be hanged!" he growled. "I'm not worrying about them. I'm positive that the girl was here. They must have taken her somewhere else. I don't know what they've done with her, but, by Jove! I'm going to find her."

"Well, if you are I wish you'd hurry up about it," said the lawyer despairingly. "If you don't find her within a few

hours it will be too late. She'll lose that half a million dollars' worth of real estate."

CHAPTER XXII.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER.

AFTER the detective had left him Max remained for two hours watching Pennington's door, without anything of moment occurring.

He was getting heartily tired of his long vigil, when suddenly his ears caught the tinkle of the telephone-bell in the lawyer's office.

Through the closed door he could hear Pennington answering the phone, but he was unable to distinguish what was said.

Fifteen minutes afterward the lawyer's door suddenly opened and Pennington came out. Max noticed that his face was pale and that he seemed to be worried. He carried a dress-suit case in his left hand.

As he stepped into the elevator Max was momentarily in a quandary.

How was he to follow him without being recognized?

To his relief another elevator happened to descend just then, and by entering it he reached the ground floor almost as soon as the lawyer arrived there.

Pennington passed through the street door with Max in close pursuit.

"I may be inexperienced, as Mr. White said, when it comes to trailing people," the young man muttered, "but, by gosh, I'm not going to lose sight of that fellow unless I drop dead."

And as Pennington jumped aboard a surface car without waiting for it to come to a stop, Max followed suit and managed to climb aboard without breaking his neck.

Pennington entered the car and Max stood outside on the platform, not failing to keep a careful eye on his man. The latter transferred to a cross-town car at Forty-Second Street, and Max, though in absolute ignorance as to where he was going, did the same.

When the car reached a certain big building Pennington got out.

Max had a good memory, and he recognized the building as the Grand Central Depot.

"I guess he is going out of town," he muttered. "He's going to take a train to somewhere, and my instructions were not to let him do it. Mr. White told me to get in a row with him and have him arrested if there was no other way of keeping him in town."

The lawyer, suit-case in hand, stepped to the ticket-office and Max, drawing near, overheard him ask for a ticket to Buffalo. His fears thus confirmed, he abandoned all attempts to avoid recognition and confronted Pennington as he stepped from the ticket-seller's window.

Then for a second his brain refused to act and he could think of no way of starting a quarrel with the lawyer, as per his instructions.

He recollected, however, that White had told him that this fellow Pennington was the kidnaper of Hildegard, and he needed no other incentive to give him enough courage to pick a fight with him. Without any preliminaries he grabbed the lawyer roughly by the lapel of his coat and growled:

"Where are you going?"

"What the devil is that your business?" cried the astonished Pennington; and then recognizing Max, he exclaimed indignantly: "What, you again? Am I never to lose you? What am I going to be accused of this time? Have I murdered your grandmother, or what?"

"You've kidnaped my Hildy!" cried Max fiercely. "It *wasn't* a vision of her I saw in your office. It was the real Hildy. You're a darned villain and you ain't going to get away from here."

"Don't be a fool," said the lawyer coolly. "Your perpetual foolishness is getting tiresome to me. If you don't go away now I warn you that you'll be arrested this time and nothing shall save you from going to prison."

"I don't care if I do get arrested," cried Max wildly. "You're going to be arrested, too—but before you are arrested you're going to get the soundest thrashing you've ever had in your life."

And to give emphasis to this statement his fist shot out and caught the lawyer on the apex of the jaw.

The strength acquired by years of hard work in the fields was behind that blow and Pennington went down like a log.

This was not according to Max's pro-

gram. His design was to follow Mr. White's suggestion that he should get the lawyer to hit him, so that he might have him arrested for assault; but the long-craved opportunity to thrash the kidnaper of his Hildy had proved too great a temptation for him and the battle was over before it began.

Pennington was a big and powerfully built man, but that one blow knocked him senseless and he fell to the stone floor of the waiting-room as completely "out" as any prize-fighter that was ever vanquished in a ring.

Instantly Max was surrounded by a crowd of indignant witnesses.

"For shame!" cried several. "It was an absolutely unprovoked assault. Where's an officer? He ought to be arrested."

Some of them helped the dazed lawyer to his feet, and when a uniformed policeman made his appearance and asked Pennington if he would make a complaint against his assailant the latter vindictively said that he would, and Max was placed under arrest and taken ignominiously to the station-house.

The young man bore this disgrace philosophically, promising himself that when they got to the station he would make a counter charge against Pennington, and thereby achieve his object of preventing the lawyer from leaving the city.

After Pennington's complaint against him had been entered on the blotter Max said to the sergeant: "I'll make a complaint of assault against him," pointing to the lawyer.

To his dismay the sergeant greeted this suggestion with the rude remark of "Rats" and motioned to the turnkey to take the prisoner to a cell.

"Well, if you won't lock him up for assault, perhaps you'll lock him up when I tell you that he is a kidnaper. He stole my girl," cried Max wildly. "Don't let him get away. I don't mind being locked up as long as you lock him up, too; but if you're going to let him go, I don't want to be locked up, either. I was told to follow him wherever he went, and I can't do that if you keep me here."

But this ingenious line of argument did not seem to appeal to the sergeant and Max was dragged back to a cell. As

he went he glanced over his shoulder and caught sight of Pennington. The latter's face wore a grin of triumph.

As the heavy iron gate closed with a bang behind Max he sat down on the board seat of his cell and groaned with despair.

"He's got away. He's got away," he muttered. "I've bungled the whole thing. Mr. White will be fine and mad with me when he hears about this."

After he had been in the cell for the best part of an hour Max inquired of the turnkey and learned that he was privileged to communicate with his friends by note or telegram. He therefore sent a wire to White acquainting him with his sorry plight.

It was night-time before the detective came to his rescue and offered bail for his release.

As the young man left the dark cell, his eyes blinking at sudden contact with the light, White said to him sadly:

"And so you let Pennington get away from you, eh?"

There was so little of indignation in his tone that Max was surprised. He had expected to be fiercely reproached by White for his failure successfully to accomplish his mission, but the little detective's manner, usually confident, was now meek and chastened.

"Yes," said Max, "I tried to carry out instructions, but things didn't turn out right. I'm awfully sorry."

"It's all right, my boy," answered White bitterly. "You're not the only one who's bungled his work this day. Pennington has fled. The woman doctor, I suppose, is preparing to follow his example, and the whereabouts of the girl still remains as great a mystery as ever. I guess I've made a miserable failure of this case."

The detective's discouraged tone horrified Max.

"But you said that you would produce

Hildy in a few hours," he cried reproachfully.

"I know I did," rejoined the detective contritely. "But things have not turned out as I expected. I've played my hand too soon and lost. I know now, beyond doubt, that Pennington is responsible for your Hildy's disappearance. I know why he kidnaped her, and I have a pretty good idea of how he accomplished it, although one or two little details are lacking. I know that he brought her to New York in his automobile and confined her in a certain sanatorium uptown. I have succeeded in finding out all these things, but I have not succeeded in finding the girl. I am bound to find her sooner or later, but it will then be too late."

"Too late for what?" cried Max anxiously.

"Too late for her to inherit an estate out West worth half a million dollars," said the detective. "Unless we can get her on a train within half an hour from now, she can't get out there in time. We've got just thirty minutes to find your Hildy. And only a miracle can enable us to do it."

On their way from the station-house he proceeded to explain to Max what he had learned from the lawyers regarding Hildegard's inheritance. He had obtained Mr. Borden's permission to communicate these facts to the young man.

The latter's astonishment was so profound that the detective, disappointed and sore at heart though he was, could not help smiling.

"Hildy an heiress!" cried Max. "Hildy worth half a million dollars! Who would have thought it? Gee whilkens, but that's a powerful lot of money!"

Then he added with a sigh: "But I don't want the money. I want Hildy. If the money was mine, I'd give all of it to know where she is now."

(To be continued.)

THE FRUIT OF EXPERIENCE.

I SAT me down and thought profound;
This maxim wise I drew;
It's easier far to like a girl,
Than make a girl like you.

QUITE LIKE A FREE-LANCE.

By HAROLD C. BURR.

Some strenuous doings in a toy republic located in the
white and green land of cool shade and hot blood.

MISS ESTELLE WATKINS heard the man behind her. She wasn't in the least afraid. The tramp steamer *Flyaway*, bound for South American ports, was plunging forward under the stars. Ahead the world was dark mystery save for the glow of the night.

A kind of creeping silence had fallen on the ship. Twice before during the evening she had seen the man in the lighted cabins, his sharp black eyes upon her, watching her searchingly, listening eagerly when she spoke. Now, he had followed her out on deck.

She leaned on the rail and watched the water boil and race past along the rusty iron hull—and waited.

Personally, there was nothing repulsive or fearsome in the fellow. He was dark and small, with white, even little teeth beneath his curled mustache, behind his red lips. About him there was a suggestion of concealed knives and passion and romance.

Of a sudden, the gloomy outline of his person, lit vaguely by the spark of his cigarette, was beside her.

"Ah, *señorita*, what beautiful nights!" he said, secure in the easy familiarity of shipboard. "I have noticed. You are traveling alone. Cannot we be good friends for a little while? You are going to Terra del Cruz?"

"Yes," shortly.

His face livened with satisfaction, but it was too dark for her to see. His voice was soft-pitched like a woman's; his hands frail and white and sensitive.

Some men of such type wear whalebones in their coats, others rock the thrones of earth.

"Ah!" he exclaimed again, "that is indeed fortunate. I am a citizen of that country. But alone! You may run into danger, *señorita*."

The flicker of a smile lurked in the corners of her mouth.

"Pooh, sir! We American girls never funk that way. Why, if I came to any harm down in your little parlor republic, Uncle Sam would lay you across his red, white, and blue knee and spank you until you cried! I come from the West, and I've got a revolver in my cabin that goes off. Why, I'm not even afraid of you. We don't need chaperons in the chaparral belt."

Again that look of satisfaction.

"You are brave. But my poor starving, bleeding country! We are poor. Our *Presidente* is surrounded by traitors. The mob is closing in on the city. Politics, ambition, vanity, greed—the curses of my country, *señorita*! Ah, the suffering and the sorrow!"

"Are you bankrupt?" she asked. "I'm awfully sorry!"

"Yes, picked clean by the vultures of state. Our bananas are a source of great revenue. The people are taxed. But"—the white little teeth gleamed and vanished—"what do you call it in your home—graft?"

"Can't you do anything?" in idle interest.

"We have done much. I am Carlos Raenzo." His voice sank to a whisper. "I have done much—without boasting like a pig. If I should tell you something, some great secret, if I gave you a mission to perform, what would you do? Pardon, *señorita*, but I have studied you, and you are of good courage. You won't fail me?"

His eager face was so close now she shrank back, but he persisted.

"This is no childish joke. The destiny, the life of my country, are at stake. I am in a corner. They will destroy me, defeat me, if I go on. But you—you will take my place? You will save Terra del Cruz?"

She had straightened into a trembling statue of astonishment.

"How can I offer any help? Who are you that you ask this thing of me? You say you are not fooling. I'm a total stranger and a woman. If I could—but you, sir, must explain your extraordinary—"

"Listen, then, attentively," he broke in hastily. "I have volumes to speak and time presses. The spies of disloyalty might find us—me here. It would ruin everything. But you must not speak of this on your honor, *señorita*."

"On my honor," she repeated after him, curious. "Go ahead, please."

"That is good," swiftly.

He looked around cautiously, and seemed satisfied at the dark desertion all about them. Then he went on, low, excitedly:

"Years ago, Terra del Cruz welcomed to her shores one of your American millionaires. He came among us searching for health, and found it. He bathed daily in the Virgin of Waters. It is a healing spring of warm and wonderful power. You can see it bubbling out of the rocks back of the monastery of St. Michael. It's life, sweet and pure. He was pleased and saw fit to bestow small favors upon us.

"But he went off on his great white yacht, and we poor simple souls never saw him again. That was years ago. Several weeks since he died and left a legacy in gratitude to Terra del Cruz. Did you ever hear of the purple sapphire, *señorita*?"

"No," she confessed, "I never did."

"A rare and beautiful stone, worth a king's ransom. It sparkles like frost-coated grapes frozen in the sun. He was the sole owner and willed it to our government. The lawyers wrote us. The purple sapphire was in a safe-deposit vault in New York. Enclosed in the letter was an order for its delivery to our representative.

"I was detailed. But the letter was lost, and it fell into the hands of evil friends, though not the order for the jewel. I sewed that into the lining of my coat. I was shadowed. They hounded me to that great city of yours. Four times they attempted my life and failed. I was elusive and very watchful.

"Now, I am here beside you, telling you the story, asking your help. The

purple sapphire is in a chamois bag around my neck. I keep it there day and night, a pistol always in my hand. But I can never elude them. Also, I am known. When I try to leave the boat they will set upon me and take my life. But you are of another race, as you say, a woman. You will make the hazard for the sake of Terra del Cruz and reap the reward?"

"Who are these enemies you speak of?" she countered, feeling her pulse flutter wildly.

"Don't you understand? They are legion, reptiles of the republic. They call themselves the revolutionary party. One of their number, a half-witted fool, aspires to become *el Presidente*. Once they get the purple sapphire in their possession, it means wealth, victory.

"The army is the bone of contention. We have no money to pay the troops. If they go over to the other side, all is lost. But the promise of gold would keep many a laggard to the plow. The purple sapphire could be converted into a paper fortune. But we will do nothing rash. We must consider. So I return with the stone to await orders. You see, *señorita*? You will aid the right cause?"

The girl did not answer immediately. For one long second she closed her eyes. Life was full and complete for her, and, after all, she was only a girl.

Alone in the world and restless, she had wandered fearlessly around from pillar to post, blessed with money, widening her outlook, tightening her grip on life. As she waited and hesitated, a vision of her father came to her.

She saw a dusty road in the Balkan mountains; dodging, falling soldiers of a petty king; a man with his back against a rock, two flame-belching revolvers in his hands, laughing through the ghost-curtain of smoke. He had died that way. But that was man's work. And yet—

"Give me the bag," she said hysterically, recklessly. "I'll take the sapphire through for you, no more questions asked."

The *Presidente's* carrier wasted not a moment.

"Give it to no one save *el Presidente* himself," he cautioned hurriedly, placing

a small round object in her hand, soft of surface, hard inside. "You will find him at the palace. At early evening he sits in a wicker chair without and talks to the people. Approach him then. Say to him Raenzo did his best. I dare not stay longer. There is nothing for me but the sea. *Adios, señorita*. May the good mother keep you. The white-and-gold banner forever!"

To the girl's stricken horror, he was climbing the rail. She made a wild lunge and tried to seize him, but she was too late.

For the space of a brief second he poised himself on the narrow hand-rail, awkwardly pawing the air like a novice on a tight-rope. Then he pitched headlong into the sweep of the sea, and the green waters closed over his head.

Carlos Raenzo had cheated his would-be murderers.

Miss Watkins, badly shaken, stamped her foot and screamed at the top of her strong young lungs.

"Help! Help! Oh, please help me! Man overboard! Help!"

Her frantic cries brought men running to her assistance. Orders were shouted. Life-preservers tossed out of the confusion went as food to the sharks. Other men brought lanterns and reached far down over the side. The Flyaway swung to in the trough of the sea.

A boat was lowered and groped around in the darkness for hours. But when dawn streaked the eastern curve of the world the search was abandoned, and the tramp steamed slowly onward, passengers and crew alike sobered.

Estelle recovered rapidly from the shock. The ship's doctor gave her a mild opiate to quiet her nerves. The rest of the voyage to Terra del Cruz passed uneventfully.

She made several attempts to identify the secret agents who had sought to steal the purple sapphire. There were any number of Spanish-looking chaps aboard, and her work was difficult, impossible. But she kept her eyes and ears wide open and meant to from now on.

Once she examined the precious stone itself. She locked herself in her stateroom, removed the chamois bag from its hiding-place, and pulled apart its string-fastened mouth.

The great sapphire rolled out on the bed-quilt. Against that background its wonderful purple brilliance was intensified. There it lay, cut and polished, big and sparkling.

The girl picked it up in her hand and held it off from her as far as her arm would reach so that the deep hues faded to lavender in the light, and it shone like a strangely colored sun.

II.

HER first sight of Terra del Cruz was a long, low strip of sand and a towering sentinel palm-tree. The Flyaway steamed slowly shoreward, the land rising out of the ocean. By and by the harbor came into view.

Estelle Watkins, arms on the rail, chin braced in her hands, watched the panorama grow and spread in beauty and outline. She saw the Yankee armored cruiser Yosemite at anchor near the crumbling old fort, buff above decks, white to her water-line, the Stars and Stripes at her stern, waving and crinkling in the warm breeze.

As the steamer passed, the white-suited crew gathered eagerly at the side and cheered and waved their hats. Estelle shook her handkerchief and swelled with pride for her country.

Have you ever heard of Terra del Cruz? It's a white and green land of cool shade and hot blood, dozing under the umbrella of the lazy blue skies in times of peace. But war comes as often as the red spots on a checkerboard, the fire-spurting rifles are leveled, and another done - while - you - wait revolution is accomplished and goes into the history of the country.

Perhaps you have seen the name of Terra del Cruz stenciled on crates of fruits in Northern markets. The rich, full-grown bananas are the pride of the place. That's the great export trade. The great import is a riffraff of gentlemen from devil-knows-where, seeking adventure, romance, achievement.

The dictator himself was a transplanted son of the States. He was young; he was handsome, and a reformed swash-buckler, as good as the worst and as bad as the best.

He had blown in on the brave winds

of adventure, reckless and fancy-free, smart. Dame Fortune had smiled on him, boosted him into a presidential-chair, child's size. Beginning as a political puppet, he had made of himself a political power.

In the cool of a certain evening, the wheel of the full moon for inspiration, he sat out on the portico of his headquarters conversing with a certain Mr. Rupert Boggs, secretary extraordinary to *el Presidente*. The palace, so called because it resembled nothing so much as a huge whitewashed cellar turned inside out, loomed a great white ghost behind them, the bare slender flag-pole a splinter of wood against the sky.

Terra del Cruz had gone to sleep long since. The dictator was talking.

"Rupert, you old war-horse," he was saying airily, "she is beautiful, fashioned like a river-reed, eyes of a loyal goddess! Rupert, I must know her. She comes from God's country. We're the only Yankee Doodle boys in all Terra del Cruz. Rupert, you must go to her officially and say: 'Welcome to our city, fair damsel. *El Presidente* sends greetings, and requests the pleasure of your company,' etc., etc. You must say that to her, Rupert."

Boggs stroked his chin thoughtfully, dubiously.

"There are drawbacks," he objected. "Suppose she won't come? What if she puts her divine nose in the air and won't budge from the hotel? That would make it kind of awkward for me."

"Rupert, your ignorance is only superior to your total intellectual depravity. Miss Watkins, Rupert, is a woman. To have interviewed the barbaric, autocratic dictator of Terra del Cruz will be something to brag about over the bonbons when she gets back to the United States. Aye, she'll come, flanked by a budget of news from home."

"You're stuck on her!" cried the scandalized Boggs.

"You're another. We all are, Rupert, my boy. Who wouldn't be, outside of a sanatorium. Is there any word from Raenzo?"

Boggs sobered down immediately.

"No, and we can't stand the gaff much longer. The ship of state has got the blind wobbles. Not a copper in the

treasury to pay the army. Everybody's grumbling. The Brotherhood of Vultures is getting bolder every day. Why, they even hold their meetings on street corners in broad daylight. Their flaring red posters, preaching open murder, are being flaunted everywhere. And the people listen. We're aliens, you know. One of the dirty little rats heaved mud at me yesterday."

The dictator shook his head, too.

"It's strange Raenzo hasn't wired us. The arrangements were for him to return on the Flyaway. Are you positive—what the dickens was that?" he suddenly shouted, startled despite himself. "I heard something move over in that corner, behind that rocking-chair. There it goes again! See where I mean?"

Boggs let his chair pitch forward from the walls of the palace to its four legs.

"Where?" he gasped. "I didn't hear a sound. It was the wind."

The moonlight shone on a cocked revolver in the dictator's hand. He left his seat to investigate. But a girl's head and shoulders seemed to rise out of the very flooring at his feet, and the *Presidente* of Terra del Cruz stared dumb-struck into two eyes of loyal blue.

It was Miss Estelle Watkins from the West!

"Sh! Don't make a noise!" she whispered in haste. "I sneaked in here. I must see the *Presidente* alone. Don't talk too loud. Some one who was aboard the Flyaway might surprise us."

She seemed nervous and on the verge of tears.

"You and I mustn't seem to know each other, though I'm afraid I've messed my part dreadfully. I'll explain in two minutes."

The *Presidente* had cast off his astonishment.

"There's no one here," he said. "The servants have gone for the night, and my body-guard belongs to the union. It won't work after ten o'clock. This is my private secretary and friend. We were enjoying a final pipeful before bed. But you're running a risk on our dark streets alone at this hour. Terra del Cruz isn't New York. After you've spoken your business we'll escort you home. What brings you here, Miss Watkins?"

Her eyes rounded, and she was looking at him curiously.

"Why, you know my name, and you aren't Spanish at all. You're English or American."

"Yankee to the backbone, thank the Lord!" he laughed back at her easily. "I was at the hotel when you registered, and learned your name out of curiosity. You came like a breath from the Jersey meadows. Won't you sit down? I have been rude."

"I'll explain quickly, sir."

She came out into the moon's rays confidently.

"The Señor Raenzo, whom you despatched to the North, came down on the Flyaway with me, a fellow passenger. He—he committed suicide off the coast of Brazil. Before he died he gave me a very rare stone to guard and deliver to you only. But I—but I—lost it."

She hid her face in her hands.

"It—it happened in a crowd to-day. Some one brushed against me. I felt a tug at my throat, a string tighten and snap free. I carried the stone in a little bag around my neck. The suddenness of the attack bewildered me. When I recovered enough to realize what had happened the thief was gone. Oh, dear, I'm so sorry, sir!"

She could easily understand the disappointment in the dictator's eyes. Private Secretary Boggs had nothing to say. She was about to plunge miserably into a detailed account of her adventures when there came a startling interruption.

A man took shape under a dim gas-lamp half a block away. Certainly, there was nothing amazing in that. But suddenly he raised his arm with a strange cry, and flame streaked from his fingers.

The cement above Boggs's head cracked and a little chip was blown off. Now, from doorways, windows, and the open street itself came other yellow flashes like rushing fireflies. The whole square was alive with man-life.

Here and there among the crowd the white-and-gold uniform of the army of the republic could be seen dodging in and out.

"Inside, quick!" yelled Rupert. "The troops have gone back on us, and it's red war. Quick, inside!"

The girl from the States never forgot

the look on the *Presidente's* face as he seized her wrist almost roughly and swung her to safety behind him. Together they rushed into the palace without difficulty, unhurt and breathless.

Boggs had gone before, and they heard him banging bullet-proof shutters all over the house. Outside the Mausers of rebellion were still singing out their song of warning. But as the cornered dictator gazed down at the white-faced girl beside him he smiled bravely, and the look in his eyes started a great wonder within her.

"You're hurting me," she reminded him gently, because he hadn't released her wrist in the excitement.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Watkins," letting her hand drop. "You—I was afraid you would be hit. Go up-stairs, won't you? There's less danger in the upper rooms. We'll call you if we want you. You'd better stay with us for a while. You see, you've come out as an ally of the dictator, alias Jack Knowles, son of Uncle Sam. That seems to be an unpopular choice just now."

He grinned whimsically.

"Listen to the firing, and see how my people love me!"

He was splendid in danger. The American girl's eyes glowed to deep indigo and her cheeks were fired.

"Give me a revolver," she pleaded courageously, "and I'll help all I know how. Do you think I'm scared, Mr. Knowles? Truly, I am not. See, my voice doesn't even shake, does it? I was raised on a prairie-ranch, and I've roped cattle, too. Please let me be a defender like you and your secretary."

"After a while, if we get into a tough corner," he promised, admiration of her mastering him. "Won't you go now? There's dear old Boggs plugging away! Hear him? They'll be rushing the doors in a minute if we don't shoot 'em up!"

The palace of Dictator Knowles was his private residence. All official business of the republic of Terra del Cruz was transacted squares away, at the plaza. There the government offices were situated—custom-house, city hall, bankrupt treasury.

The palace was small, outwardly plain, inwardly comfortable. It had been fortified against insurrection. In

a back room was a store of rifles and revolvers and a barrel of ammunition. The building itself sprang from a blank wall, windowless at the sides. Any concerted attack would have to come from the front.

Nothing short of a cannon could batter in the walls, and two men like Knowles and Boggs could hold the house against a host of rifle-armed men.

Each took his place at the loopholes, and soon their Kraggs were pumping out smoky music, fire-laden and full of harm, and the swarthy little devils who ventured within range pitched headlong, to crawl wounded away or to rise no more. The street was raked and cleared, and the conflict narrowed to a sharpshooting duel.

The two friends worked side by side, eyes screwed down to the level of a black gun-barrel. The girl had gone. Once or twice they heard her walking around overhead. If the lost purple sapphire of salvation had any part in their thoughts, neither said a word outwardly. Each was a philosopher and too fine a loser to make excuses, harbor vain regrets.

Perhaps, if Estelle Watkins had brought the precious jewel through in safety, it would have arrived too late to use to advantage, anyway. And in such manner the girl was purged of blame.

III.

DAWN was whitening the scene out in front. Suddenly, a wild shout went up. The dictator, looking hard and long, reached over and squeezed Boggs's shoulder in a fearful grip. Rupert nodded. This was what they had feared—knew must come.

The revolutionists had swooped down on the arsenal. A steel Gatling gun was being hauled into range, and in two minutes the thing would be pouring a hurricane of lead into the palace. Flesh and blood and mortar would go down in ruins.

"The serenaders have wrung in a young cannon," Knowles said, his mouth hard-shut. "That's not according to Hoyle."

Even as he spoke, the sharp, spitting bark of the machine gun rattled out.

The two sorely beset Yankees closed their eyes and waited.

The building shook and trembled, crumbled. Little gaps showed here and there in the walls. Tiny fogs of powdered plaster sifted into the rooms.

Grim and silent, comrades alone in the smoke-choked shambles, the adventurers coolly returned the fire. It was light enough now to see around.

Knowles could make out the man at the crank of the Gatling gun. He took careful aim and pulled the trigger. The fellow reeled away, threw up his hands, and toppled to his knees.

But the respite was only temporary. Other rebels crowded to take his place. It was only a case of minutes now before the end would come. Light and dark would rush together, and Boggs and Knowles would never hear the whistle of another bullet, feel the blood leap at the battle-cry.

The *Presidente's* confused thoughts flew to the girl up-stairs. If he could only save her somehow. Perhaps a flag of truce—

But, hark, what was that? Some of the besiegers were excitedly pointing down a side street. The machine gun was suddenly deserted.

Out of that cross-byway came a rushing, cheering avalanche of white duck and short navy carbines. Those cheers were good Yankee cheers! The rebels, frightened at the uniform the invaders wore, screamed and scuttled off like wind-whipped chaff.

Knowles and Boggs, unable to credit the miracle they saw, heard a voice behind them. "It was something I thought of when I found an American flag in one of the rooms up-stairs. I opened the trap-door in the garret and went out on the roof. Once the flag caught the breeze and the attack kept up, I realized my scheme was working. Those sailors are from the Yosemite. They saw the Stars and Stripes and heard the fighting and came ashore to investigate. We have a right to their protection, haven't we? We are all American citizens."

Knowles looked at Boggs, and Boggs looked at his chief. There was a comical pause.

Then they grabbed each other insanely

around the waist and went waltzing to the four corners of the room, two glad souls gone mad. Miss Watkins watched them in nervous amusement, excitement, relief.

And ten minutes later, when the natty young lieutenant in command of the detachment pounded on the door with the hilt of his naked sword, he found two flushed gentlemen, one time of Hackensack, New Jersey, and a girl he had met years ago at a dance during his midshipman days at Annapolis.

The dignity of his official status relaxed and his pleasure was undisguised. Chaos concentrated in a wild babel of sound—explanations, introductions, questions. Into the midst of it all came a sailor of the Yosemite, touching his round white cap.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said respectfully to Lieutenant Graves, "but one of them poor yellow devils is dying-like, sir. He's asked for the young lady. I think she'd better see what he wants, sir."

Estelle came quickly forward in surprise.

"Me? What does he want of me? But, of course, I'll do what I can. Where is he—outside? But wait. Bring him in here and make him comfortable. Can't we, Mr. Knowles?"

Knowles nodded. The sailor saluted and withdrew, and soon he was back again, two other jackies with him, bearing between them the groaning, limp body of a wounded man. They let him tenderly down on the lounge and backed off.

He was scarcely more than a boy and dressed in civilian clothes. Dirt-smearred, gruesome, and faint, he drew in his breath in great, hard gusts. The lieutenant took off his cap and bowed his head. Estelle was on her knees beside the stricken man.

"Lift my head—a little, please," he breathed weakly. "There is a sister—somewhere? Would that I might receive the divine unction. But the *señorita*—I have wronged—her, and I must—make my confession. To-day—yesterday I stole from her—the purple sapphire. I was under—under orders from my brothers of the Vultures—who knew—but—I was—was false to—my brotherhood vows. A dream of wealth—all—all—my own. I meant to—escape—to—to—Europe. It—it is here—in my—my—breast-pocket. How—how—dark—I—I—can't—can't—see—her—any—one."

And he was gone.

Boggs silently unbuttoned the coat of the dead. There, slightly bulging out an inner pocket, was the familiar chamois-bag Miss Watkins had come to know so dangerously well.

Boggs was gravely triumphant as he looked toward the dictator. But that supreme personage was busily occupied elsewhere.

Some one lifted the girl back to her feet. She felt strong, well arms about her.

"The troops will switch to loyalty again," Knowles whispered in her ear. "We hold trumps. And I hold a trump, too—a girl trump. I want you for my queen of Terra del Cruz. It was love and the world went mad, and I swear nothing mattered after that first sight of you at the Travelers' Hotel. No, nothing mattered—power, people, life—nothing, nothing, nothing! Miss Watkins, I don't even know your first name, but I want you to be my wife. What is it they say back in the States—it's up to you?"

And her face shone as if the sun had broken there as she twisted around in his arms, and she was quite happy enough to yell.

HUMAN NATURE.

DETERMINED beforehand, we gravely pretend
To ask the opinion and advice of a friend;
Should his differ from ours on any pretense,
We pity his want both of judgment and sense;
But if he falls in and agrees with our plan,
Why, really, we think him a sensible man.

Through No Fault of His Own.*

By CASPER CARSON.

Author of "The Trump Card," "When Reuben Came to Town," "Playing Against the Colors," etc.

The tale of a conspiracy that revolved about a treasure from Italy and became tangled up in a baggage-check at Buffalo.

CHAPTER XI.

LETTING LOOSE ON THE ENEMY.

THE chief point in the Wall Street game is to find out what the other fellow is doing. Thousands of dollars are spent to this end every year, and each of the big houses maintains a secret intelligence bureau which, in resourcefulness and cunning, could give points to the famous "Third Section" of Russia.

It will readily be seen, therefore, how important it was that I should have a reliable avenue of information concerning Pike; and I congratulated myself over and over again upon the good fortune which had thrown the count in my way at the exact psychological moment when I most needed him.

Indeed, I could not have secured a better agent for my purpose if I had had him made to order.

He came from the race with which diplomacy was born; he was in Pike's closest confidence, and I had no fear that he would sell me out, for I was the only one in a position to give him what he wanted. No one could outbid me with Count Silvio; he knew well that I was the sole person able to deliver the goods.

And in return, I am bound to say, he stood faithfully by his compact. There was scarcely an incident of Pike's daily life which was not made known to me. All his secret plans and purposes were revealed to me in advance.

I could tell accurately where he would be at almost any moment of the day. A corps of private detectives constantly dogging his steps could hardly have furnished me such a wealth of information as I gleaned from Testudini's frequent and voluminous reports.

And what he could not find out for himself, he gathered from that banker

cousin of his down-town, or from other sources of information open to him.

Thus I learned, early in the course of my operations, that Pike was preparing to risk everything upon one big plunge. The excitement aroused by the theft of the Raphael, and the prestige obtained by its sale to Mr. Tracy, had proven a big advertisement to his International Curio Company, and he judged the time was ripe to make a killing.

Its shares, listed upon the curb, were selling then at about sixty-five or seventy; but he got a group of minor financiers down-town to back him, and, putting into the pool himself every cent he possessed, was proposing to boost the price up to par or better, when, of course, he would stand from under, and the water-logged concern would sag down to its normal level, leaving the dupes who had bought at the high price to hold the bag.

He and his associates would naturally unload at the top-notch; and then he didn't care what became of the poor old company.

"Let it go to the boneyard," said Pike, in detailing his scheme to Testudini. "It has served its purpose, and after this deal there will be too much scandal connected with it ever to make it worth while resurrecting.

"I sha'n't care," he added boastfully. "I shall be safely out of the woods, with all my obligations squared up; and if I can only get Grace Tracy to marry me, there will be no further need for me to soil my fingers with this business of setting traps to catch suckers.

"It's a sure winner, count," he said. "I'm going to make a barrel of money!"

In his vaunting security he took no reckoning of the new firm of Tracy & Sivers; although, indeed, why should he, for he knew nothing of it? We were not

* Began April ARGOSY. Single copies, 10 cents.

hanging out any signs, or making any parade of our intentions. This was one concern whose business was best conducted without publicity.

He had, I may state here, at old man Tracy's request, agreed not to push the charge of stealing the picture against me; but he had, of course, no idea that I was on any terms of intimacy with Grace, and the last thing which would ever have suggested itself to him was that I might be in a position to oppose him in his financial operations.

If he ever thought of me at all, he probably fancied that I was out with some theatrical company, or else haunting the agents' offices along the Rialto in search of a job.

And I was well content to have him in this easy frame of mind; for I proposed to give him plenty of rope and, if I could help it, not let him imagine he was up against anything until I was ready to pull the trap.

Accordingly, for a time, the booming of the I. C. Company's stock went along swimmingly. The public and the vast army of suckers was not yet sufficiently interested or credulous to do more than take an occasional nibble; but Pike and his confederates were loudly and ostentatiously buying, and the upward movement was beginning to attract attention.

It costs money to conduct an operation of this kind, though; for although the transfers recorded might be only from Pike's right hand to his left—"washing," the process is technically termed—there is nevertheless the broker's commission to be paid; and then, too, in any advance movement of the sort there is always a lot of stock which comes from nobody knows where, yet has to be absorbed.

I laid low, therefore, and let them spend their good money until the war-chest they had accumulated was practically exhausted. Finally, when the stock had gone up to 102, Testudini reported that Pike was getting ready to unload.

The public, excited by predictions of still further and more sensational advances, was beginning to buy, and Pike was consequently preparing judiciously to feed out his holdings, and reap the harvest.

The next day I took the field, and started the ball rolling by selling short

a small block of two hundred shares. It was snapped up as a trout might go after a fly, and the brokers for the opposition kept on bidding the price up as merrily as ever.

Step by step, I lured them on in this way, letting them think that the sales I offered were mere sporadic "fliers," without particular rime or reason, until Testudini informed me that all their resources were gone, and that it was time to bring my heavy artillery into action.

Bing! I let them have it. A broadside of 10,000 shares short, which struck them hard.

I saw Pike, where he stood over against the ropes on the other side of the ring, chatting nonchalantly with an acquaintance, turn sharply, with a sudden terror in his eyes, while a gray, sickly pallor overspread his face.

In another moment, though, he had nodded to his brokers and they were out in the ring vociferously whooping things up. The price which had staggered under the impact of my blow, rallied under their exertions and regained its former level.

Bing! I let them have another one, ten thousand shares more; and this time their efforts to recover were less spontaneous. Despite all that they could do the price did not come up to its former notch by several fractions.

Seeing that I had them on the run, I opened up on them with a raking rapid-fire. In lots of a thousand, two thousand, and twenty-five hundred shares, my brokers kept selling short.

No organization so slenderly backed as theirs could stand such an onset. The price sagged, weakened, and broke. By five and ten points at a time, it tobogganed down the scale.

Pie rushed about foaming and cursing, his face white as death, while his brokers, their coats off, shouted and gesticulated in the center of the ring like frenzied madmen. But no efforts could have stayed that decline. It was a panic.

CHAPTER XII.

STOPPED IN THE STREET.

THAT evening, flushed and exultant with victory, I made my way to Everett

Tracy's house to acquaint the other member of the firm with the details of the glorious battle we had won; and I really believe I was prouder of the commendation Grace gave me, when she met me at the door and extended both her hands in congratulatory greeting, than Dewey was of the acclaim which welcomed him on his return from Manila.

And I had some reason to be proud, too, for although it was my first essay at financial warfare, I had carried out her commands to the letter. We had distinctly "met the enemy and they were ours."

Pike and his combination was routed, horse, foot, and dragoon, while we had won a fortune, and were in a position to take over all his companies. Reorganized and operated upon an honest basis, I believed I could make them pay, and Grace and I spent a pleasant half hour deciding upon what we should do with them when they came at last under our control.

While we were chatting on in this fashion, old man Tracy came into the room, and after greeting me pleasantly, although in a sort of patronizing tone—he had no idea, you see, that I was the financial genius who had kicked up the big row on the curb that day—he said: "Come out into the gallery, Sivers. I want you to see the famous Raphael. It was hung only this afternoon."

I followed him with a good deal of curiosity to look upon this great canvas of which so much had been written, and which, since its arrival in America, had stirred up more trouble than a box of monkeys; yet, when I did finally cast my eyes on it, I am frank to say I was not greatly impressed.

"Well, if that is what you paid one hundred thousand dollars for," ran my mental comment as I surveyed the dark and dingy daub with the paint falling off it in patches, and its whole surface cracked and seamed, "and if that is what Testudini, and the Italian government and everybody else, has been kicking up such a row about, then I think that you have been most beautifully gold-bricked, and they are fit candidates for a lunatic asylum."

But, of course, I didn't say anything of the kind out loud. Instead, I copied the old man as well as I could, walking

around and squinting at the thing out of the corner of my eye and over the back of my hand, and exclaiming upon the beauties of the *chiaroscuro* or going into ecstasies over the "mellowness of the tone."

"Yes," said old Everett, waving his hand toward it consequentially, "there it is hanging upon my wall, and it cost me a hundred thousand dollars; but—would you believe it, Sivers?—it doesn't belong to me at all."

"Doesn't belong to you?" I repeated. "To whom does it belong, then, pray?"

"To Grace!" digging me in the ribs and chuckling as though he had perpetrated the greatest joke in the world. "I had no sooner bought and paid for it, than I turned right round and made a deed of gift of it to her."

I tried to exhibit an adequate surprise, although I'm afraid I made a pretty poor stagger at it; for this was old news to me. She had told me the afternoon we formed our partnership that she intended to coax her father into making her a present of the Raphael, and I knew that he had long since yielded to her importunities.

Still, my feigned astonishment seemed to pass muster with the old man, for he went on with gleeful jocularly: "Yes, sir; made her a free gift of it to do with as she chose. That's what she said to me: 'Can I do with it as I please, papa?' And I told her yes. I mean it, too, by Jove; when I make a present I don't tie any strings to it. She can cut the thing up into carpet rags if she wants to. I'll never say a word."

He would probably have gone on expatiating at length upon his generosity, but we were interrupted at that moment by the butler, who came to inform me that there was a summons for me at the telephone.

It was Testudini, I discovered, and he had called me up to inform me that matters were coming to a climax.

"Pike has just come in, raging and tearing," he explained. "He learned in settling up with his brokers that you were the mysterious person who caused his downfall; and he is vowing by all the saints in the calendar that he will make you sup sorrow for it before he is through with you."

"He also says," continued Testudini, "that unless he can raise one hundred thousand dollars before the day after to-morrow, nothing that he can do will be able to keep him out of State's prison, and he is demanding that I obtain this money for him.

"He has repudiated all our former agreements; but he says that if I promise to secure the sum he needs from my cousin to-morrow, which I can do as a loan upon my Italian estate, he will accompany me to Mr. Tracy's this very evening, steal the Raphael, and let me get away with it upon the Campanic, which sails for Naples at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon.

"I asked for a few minutes to consider, and making an excuse, stole out to acquaint you with his intentions and find out what you wanted me to do."

"Wait just a minute, and I will let you know," I answered; then I stepped hurriedly back into the picture-gallery, where Grace and her father were still standing in front of the old Raphael.

"Mr. Tracy," I said, addressing the old gentleman, "you have trusted Albert Pike and have honored him with your friendship; you have even been willing that he should pay suit to your daughter. Now, do you want absolute and convincing proof that the man is an unprincipled traitor, a scoundrel and a blackleg, who would stop at nothing?"

"Why, why, Mr. Sivers," stammered the banker. "You astound me. Do you realize what you are saying? These are pretty serious charges which you are making."

"Not more serious than the enterprise which Pike is even now planning to put into execution," I replied.

Then I told him the information which Testudini had just imparted to me over the telephone.

Well, at first the old boy could hardly believe it; but when I assured him that I had heard Pike with my own ears hatching up this scheme to substitute a copy for the genuine Raphael, believing that Mr. Tracy would never be able to detect the difference, he began to get his mad up. That was touching him upon his vanity, as an art connoisseur, and he was quick to resent the slur.

"Go ahead and make what arrange-

ments you please, Mr. Sivers," he said. "If the fellow has any such dastardly project on foot, I shall be only too willing to assist in exposing him."

I therefore told Testudini, who had been waiting patiently at the other end of the wire all this time, to consent to Pike's demands.

"Now," I said as I returned to Mr. Tracy, "I shall be greatly surprised if before long we do not hear from Mr. Pike himself."

True enough. Not ten minutes could have elapsed before the telephone-bell rang sharply once more, and Pike called up to inquire if either Mr. Tracy or his daughter were at home.

The butler, under my instructions, answered the call, and responded that both had gone to the theater, and that they were not expected back until after eleven o'clock.

"Ah, thank you," returned Pike in his suavest tones. "I am sorry to miss them, but I guess I will drop in there anyhow on my way over to the club. I left a book in the drawing-room the other night which I want to get."

Mr. Tracy, who by this time had begun to take considerable more stock in my revelation, now became a little excited at the nearness of the approaching crisis, and suggested that we call in a policeman to take care of Pike in case he should start any rough house.

To this I rather demurred, knowing that the fellow was at bottom an arrant coward, and fearing that the presence of an officer might result in bringing the affair into unpleasant notoriety; but he insisted so strenuously that finally I yielded, and we started out together to find a "cop."

As we strode briskly down the block, however, a man stepped out of the shadow of an adjoining house, and walking up to me, tapped me on the shoulder.

"Fred Sivers?" he asked.

"That is my name, yes; but I cannot stop to talk to you now. I am in a great hurry."

"I'm afraid you'll *have* to stop and talk with me, young man. I have a warrant here for your arrest."

"For my arrest?" I ejaculated. "Upon what charge?"

"Stealing a painting valued at one

hundred thousand dollars," he answered laconically. "It is sworn out by Albert Pike."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT UP.

To have been so accosted a month before would have sent me off into a double conniption fit. Now, it did not cause me to turn even a hair.

"Ah," I said, glancing at Mr. Tracy with a smile, "Pike is trying to get even. This is the way, I suppose, in which he hopes to make me 'sup sorrow' as he said to Testudini."

I turned to the officer.

"It will be possible for me to give bail to-night?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, sir," his tone changing to one of more respect, as he saw how coolly I was taking the affair. "It will be necessary for you to accompany me to the station-house, I am afraid; but they will detain you there only until you can send out and get somebody to go on your bond."

"There will be no need to send out for anybody," broke in old man Tracy eagerly. "I shall be only too happy to furnish bail for Mr. Sivers upon this ridiculous charge."

So, really, the whole episode didn't take over ten minutes. We called a cab and drove over to the station-house, which was near at hand. Mr. Tracy and I affixed our signatures to a document thrust out at us by a perfunctory clerk, and which bound me in the sum of ten thousand dollars to appear in the magistrate's court on the following Tuesday for examination. Then we were permitted to leave, and getting the chap who had arrested me to accompany us, we returned to the house.

In fact, we were gone so short a time that Grace had not even begun to worry at our absence.

Still, we did not have too much leeway at that; for before we had fully completed the recital of our adventures, there came a sharp peal at the doorbell, and the butler admitted Pike and Count Testudini.

The two remained inside the drawing-room until the servant had arranged the

lights, and withdrawing returned downstairs; then Pike, peering out cautiously, and seeing that the coast was apparently clear, stole with noiseless footsteps down the hallway to the art gallery, followed by Testudini.

Once inside, they lost no time in getting to work. Turning on a single electric-bulb, just over the Raphael, Pike lifted down the famous canvas from the wall, and with a few deft touches from a screw-driver, quickly removed it from its frame.

Then he took off the wrappings from the copy, which he had brought under his arm, slipped it into the place of the original, and was just about to lift it to its niche, when—zip! I pushed the button upon which my finger had been resting, and the gallery was flooded with light.

Pike let the heavy frame fall to the floor with a crash, and turned in consternation to face the little group of us where we stood revealed in an alcove on the other side of the room.

He attempted no defense or excuses. He was wise enough to see that the game was up for good and all. He gave but one wild, terrified glance in our direction; then turning, put down his head, and tore through the door as though all the fiends in perdition were in pursuit of him.

"Let him go," said Mr. Tracy. "I do not think that any of us will ever be bothered with him again, and one would merely soil his own hands should he attempt to give such a dirty cur his just deserts."

"What shall we do with the other one, though?" he whispered to me, nodding his head toward where Count Testudini stood clasping his precious Raphael to his breast. "You said he was only in on this affair through your instructions, did you not?"

"Let me deal with him," spoke up Grace quickly, stepping across the room and addressing the Italian with graceful courtesy.

"Count Testudini," she said, "I understand that you have been put to great vexation and trouble in various ways by your folly in disposing of this picture against the laws of your country, and that if you have committed any wrong, or

been willing to commit any wrong in regard to it, you have been more than punished by the anxiety and disquietude you have been compelled to endure. It is certain, also, that neither Mr. Sivers nor I have anything to complain of in you, but are rather under heavy obligations to you.

"Therefore, as a fair exchange is no robbery, I am going to ask you to let that copy of yours which you and your associate have so obligingly framed for us, remain here and hang in our gallery, while you can take the original back to Italy where it belongs."

Her father gave a sharp gasp of disapproval, and stepped forward as though to interpose; but she quickly raised her hand.

"Is it not mine?" she demanded?
"Mine, to do with as I please?"

He stopped, rubbed his chin irresolutely for a moment; then gracefully surrendered.

"That's right," he admitted. "Everett Tracy never goes back on a bargain. But, Lord, Grace," he groaned, "I didn't know when I made it that you were such a darn fool!"

My examination before the magistrate the following Tuesday, on the charge of stealing the picture, was rather a one-sided affair.

There was no prosecution, as Pike, himself a fugitive from justice, had fled the country, and I could have been discharged by merely pleading not guilty to the accusation; but for my thorough vindication, I insisted on presenting the evidence which I had gathered in my own defense.

Taking the stand, I related in detail the strange chain of circumstances which had succeeded in getting me so tangled up with that pestiferous trunk, and in order to corroborate my assertion that my original taking of it in the station at Buffalo had been nothing more than a mistake, I produced the check I had held on that occasion, and which had since been preserved in the files of the railway company.

No. 467,843, it will be remembered, was the slip under which Pike had shipped the trunk containing the Raphael,

while that containing my theatrical wardrobe and modest belongings was checked under No. 467,848.

On the duplicate which I presented, however, the final figure "8" had been cut in half by coming in contact with some sharp instrument or edge, and hence it is not strange was deciphered as a "3" by the baggage-master in his haste to earn my tip.

I should add, too, that in giving my testimony, I did not carry the relation of my adventures to the court any farther than to the time when I rented the half-bedroom and ordered my trunk taken thither.

"Well," said the judge, leaning over from his bench, "the trunk had now come into your hands, and you knew to whom it belonged. How was it that you did not at once return it to its proper owner?"

"But that was just exactly what was done, your honor," I asserted. "Within half an hour after that trunk was brought into my lodging-house it was taken out again and transported directly to Mr. Pike's apartments. Count Testudini is here and will swear that it duly arrived that afternoon. In fact, this is the very way in which Mr. Pike regained possession of his picture."

"Oh, in that case," said his honor disgustedly, "the bottom drops out of the whole accusation. It is a shame," he grumbled, "that the docket should be littered up with any such baseless proceedings as this. The case is dismissed, and the prisoner is honorably discharged."

And so I walked from the court-room exonerated before the world, and without the shadow of a suspicion on my good name.

They say that all properly constructed stories should end with a wedding.

This one, therefore, does not at present come up to requirements; but if the reader will only be content to wait a month or two longer, he may find that the fault has been rectified. For, I don't mind telling you in strict confidence that the firm name of Sivers & Tracy is to be changed in the near future to that of Sivers & Sivers.

A Predicament and a Desperado.

By JOHN MONTAGUE.

Exciting experiences that befell a woman in haste who sent a stranger in search of another woman with a bluff in her back yard.

IT certainly was a predicament. Being a girl made it worse. The predicament was the loss of my laundress's address, and a sudden order from headquarters to change my base of operations without a train's delay.

In other words, I had to catch the next train that left the little Western town—so full of atmosphere, but nothing else—where I was then writing up "conditions" as relating to cold weather and cow sufferings, and proceed immediately to the capital of the State for an interview with the Governor for my magazine.

My laundry was not to be returned for three days, and I did not know where my artiste-of-the-tub lived. I could not even recall her name, although I remembered it began with F.

I had but this feeble clue, and the fact that there was a bluff in her back yard. This geographical detail had been impressed indelibly on my memory by her account of the loss of a valuable garment of mine which had blown off the line and irrevocably disappeared over that bluff the week before.

The first thing I did after getting these vague threads in line was to consult a directory. As I have said, the town was no metropolis, but it seemed to be partial to persons whose names begin with F. Even after running over all of them, however, I could not discover one that sounded familiar. In despair, I closed the book.

The task had taken me all of fifteen minutes, during which time I was made additionally nervous by a telepathic intuition—if there is such a sense—that a pair of eyes were keenly glued upon me.

When I gave up the search and looked wildly about, I discovered that the eyes were dark-brown ones and belonged to a very much tanned young man with a black mustache.

He was attired in Western raiment, and was leaning carelessly, though gracefully, on the other end of the hotel counter.

The lines of disappointment in my forehead, and the rather elevated attitude of my puckered eyebrows, seemed to awake in him a feeling of sympathy, for, doffing his sombrero, he approached and inquired quite courteously into my trouble.

He noticed that it was the directory to which I had been referring; and inasmuch as he knew every man, woman, and child in the town, *et cetera*, I jumped at the opportunity, for I now saw myself emerging from my predicament.

"Do you know a laundress whose name begins with F?" I asked.

He began to think, whereupon I added that she had a bluff in her back yard. The bluff didn't seem to help materially, however, for, after turning his sombrero round and round numberless times, looking at the floor, and squinting at the ceiling, he guessed he would have to confess that there was one person, at least, in town with whom he was not acquainted.

"But," he hastened on, seeing my look of extreme disappointment, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get on my horse and visit every yard with a bluff attachment until I locate the lady-of-the-suds whose name begins with F. You say you must make the next train. That will give me just two hours. I'll find your laundry or bust."

"Oh, thank you!" I cried.

"But, in case I fail to find her in time, you might leave me your name and forwarding address," he added.

"You *must* find her in time," said I. "To-morrow is Sunday, and I haven't a clean waist left to wear. I simply *must* have that laundry before I leave. Besides, I wouldn't think of troubling you to forward it to me; the hotel would attend to that."

"Hotels are often remiss in such matters," he replied rather coldly; "*this* hotel, particularly."

Then he mounted his horse; he didn't "vault" into the saddle—just placed his foot in the stirrup and ascended easily and gracefully until he became a part of the animal. Bowing pleasantly, he put spurs to his steed and galloped off. Nor did he once look behind, although I watched him until he was out of sight.

II.

THE ensuing hour was one of anxious suspense to me. I packed hastily, leaving space in the top of my suit-case for the laundry. Would he find it, or wouldn't he? I asked myself, and something within me answered that he "wouldn't."

Everything ready but the missing wash, I sat down at my window to await his return, my eyes alternating between the watch in my hand and the stretch of roadway to be seen from my window. How fast time flies! Whenever I referred to the watch I found the hour-hand had jumped five minutes nearer to train-time.

Finally, almost distracted, I abandoned all hope. Going down-stairs, I explained to the clerk and gave him my forwarding address. Then I walked to the depot, but a block away.

Here I maintained a second vigil. Futile. The train came, a half-hour late. Looking as though I had lost my last relation, I boarded it.

How hope outlasts everything else! I stood on the rear platform as the cars pulled out. The puffs of the engine began to grow shorter and shorter, when, afar off down the roadway, I espied a horseman at full gallop. Excitedly, I waved my handkerchief.

It was my hero! And under his arm was a white parcel! *My wash!* He had found the laundress!

It was a race that I shall never forget. Urged by my frantic gestures of encouragement, he won! Galloping alongside the train, he pitched the parcel over the railing at my feet.

"There are five bluffs in this town," he shouted above the noise of the engine, "and she lives on the one farthest away!"

"Thanks! Thanks!" I screamed, and I believe I threw him a kiss.

He was very handsome—and I would not ever see him again. You know what a girl will do, at times—to show her gratitude.

He returned the wireless message—I remember that distinctly enough. Then steam got the best of horse-power, and my picturesque unknown rider was left behind—a cloud of dust, a memory, a pleasant recollection of a—

Merciful heavens! Bucketsful of chagrin! I grasped the railing for support. My knees grew weak; I felt faint; I gasped in horror at the thought! *I hadn't paid him for the wash!*

Dreadful plight. One predicament so close on the heels of another completely wrecked me, physically, mentally, every way.

Sadly I picked up the bundle and returned to the interior of the coach, to sit at a window, chin in hand, wondering what he was thinking of me. I knew him not, therefore was I additionally grieved—I could not pay him back. I felt an impostor, mountains big.

You may think it about time that something right happened to me; but, believe it or not, the foregoing is as a scratched finger to a lost limb compared with subsequent occurrences. When I was beginning to feel that my troubles were over, I found to my dismay that they had just begun.

Listen: I reached the capital. It was hot as ginger, and I had traveled with the coach-window open. My waist resembled a chimney-sweep's jacket—soot from stock to belt. But I didn't care much about that. All my other waists and stocks were in my suit-case, fresh from the iron. I secured a room at a hotel and went to bed.

The next day was Sunday. I was to interview the Governor. I must look my very best. I opened my laundry—and *fainted!* That is, I became unconscious, stunned for a moment, as though some one had given me a resounding slap in the face.

I blinked, I rubbed my eyes, I opened them to their widest—but it was true!

It wasn't *my* wash. It was a *man's!*

Three shirts—stripe, cross-bar, and polka-dot; two pairs of socks; six collars, size fifteen; and a handkerchief with a peculiar monogram in one corner!

I sat down on the floor and wept. Then I stopped crying and laughed—the situation was so ludicrous.

What was I to do? The only waist I had with me was the sooty one I had just discarded. I couldn't interview a Governor in that. It was Sunday, and all stores closed.

I was an absolute stranger in the city. My laundry was still swinging in the breeze over that bluff in Mrs. F.'s back yard.

Sequence of thought conjured up my hero. Hero? He was a villain! I hated him as poison. I could have pulled every wave out of his chestnut hair.

How glad I was that I hadn't paid him for some one else's laundry—that was one consolation, though poor.

But there was the Governor. And there was my magazine waiting for that interview—and my position hanging in the balance, maybe.

There was but one alternative. A clean shirt, or a much soiled waist? I decided in favor of the former. I would be mannish on this occasion. Not only would I wear one of those shirts, but I would appropriate one of the collars as well.

A piece of blue ribbon I converted into a tie. The collar was so large that it gave my throat a slightly *décolleté* appearance. The shirt was quite roomy—I had selected the polka-dot one—but when I had belted it in, did not look so unbecoming.

I finished my toilet by tucking the handkerchief of the peculiar monogram into the pocket on the left bosom of the shirt. Then, pinning on my straw hat, I sallied forth to confront the head of the State.

III.

PEOPLE stared at me as though I was some curiosity from Tibet. Whether their interest was aroused by my attire, or from the fact that I "looked" a stranger, remained a mystery until I was shown into the Governor's presence. Then I felt convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that it was the former supposition.

Upon glancing at me for the first time he gave a start of surprise. I felt myself grow cold in spite of the torrid weather.

Next I became hot; then all sorts of chills and flushes overran me at the same time.

The Governor's eyes were positively *glued* to my improvised shirt-waist.

I strove to smile, and was on the point of explaining when he stepped forward, begged my pardon, and relieved my pocket of the monogramed handkerchief.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded rather sharply.

I told him the circumstances, and inquired why he asked.

"Why?" he repeated. "Why, because this is one of Dandy Jim's handkerchiefs. See the monogram? Never another like it."

I failed to see why that fact should have caused so much demonstration, until the Governor continued:

"Dandy Jim is the outlaw referred to in that five-thousand-dollar reward notice posted over there on the wall. He's wanted on six different charges."

You can easily imagine I became all interest. Here were unlooked for incidentals to the interview, an atmospheric episode that I had no intention of missing for my magazine. The Governor continued:

"If he was having his washing done in Scarboro, he must be in that vicinity. Tell me again about this fellow who hunted up the laundress for you. That might be Jim himself. It sounds uncommonly like his etiquette. He's as polite as he is immaculate, you know."

"And as handsome as he's elusive," I supplemented to myself.

Somehow the interview was forgotten for the moment, so interested were the Governor and I in Jim's capture. In the midst of our plans a boy from my hotel announced that some one was calling me on the telephone from Scarboro.

I could not imagine who it could be, as the only person there who knew my present whereabouts was the hotel clerk. I did not like to leave the Governor's office once I had gained entrance, so I asked and received permission to have the call switched to his phone.

Then I received a big surprise. It was the horseman who had made such a muddle as a laundry-messenger. I made a quick gesture to the Governor as I listened.

"Hello, is this Miss Bonsall?" he asked, and I was astounded that he knew my name.

I answered in the affirmative, and he continued:

"Well, I'm downright sorry about that laundry mix-up of yours. I discovered only this morning what a mess I had made of things. You see, I had but a very short time yesterday to hunt up Madam F., so I handled matters in a rush. I visited all the back yards with bluffs in them, asked for a laundress whose name began with F, and it was not until the last minute that I discovered her.

"And would you believe it? She is the very woman who was doing some work for me, although I didn't know her name. When she saw me dash like a madman almost into her kitchen, she assumed, I suppose, that I was in a great hurry. Before I could open my mouth she had pushed the package into my hands. I forgot at the instant that she had some of my personal stuff and stupidly supposed it was your laundry she was thrusting upon me, and not my own. So I flung her a bill and dashed away to overtake, if possible, your train. You know what followed.

"But this morning, my own laundry not arriving, I investigated, and discovered the horrible blunder I had made. Imagine my chagrin. I instantly sought the hotel clerk, obtained your name and forwarding address, and here I am explaining. I might add that I have *your* laundry and will gladly bring it to you personally."

I nearly screamed "Yes!" I was afire with excitement. Something right was about to happen to me at last.

Undoubtedly this fellow was none other than the notorious Dandy Jim, the fearless, elusive outlaw with the five thousand dollars reward hanging over his head.

I consulted with the Governor, and we decided on a plan of capture. I was to meet the desperado at my hotel, receive my laundry from his own hands, and then deliver him to the officers of the law hiding about the room. This all arranged and clear, we settled down to the interview, which consumed more than two hours.

I then started for my hotel. The roads were so dusty that I decided to cut across a large park, which would shorten my walk considerably. But fate was against me those two days, tooth and nail.

As I turned the corner of a small building, which afterward proved to be an abandoned schoolhouse, I was nearly run down by a horseman. I recovered my equilibrium to make the shocking discovery that the rider was none other than the man who had telephoned me several hours before.

It seems he was so anxious to get that laundry into my hands with the least possible delay that he had not been patient enough to wait for the seven o'clock train, but had set out immediately on horseback. Consequently, he had arrived considerably beforehand.

"I saw you crossing the park," he said, "and I thought this would be a better place to meet you than the hotel. You see, I have a reason for not appearing in town just yet."

I knew the reason, and it was looming up before me in letters a foot high. He had dismounted and was leisurely tying his horse.

I could not run away; he might shoot me. I did not want to give him a least little hint that I knew who he really was.

He smiled when he noticed the shirt and collar I was wearing, but said nothing about them.

"Do you notice anything strange about me?" he asked tentatively.

I nodded and touched my upper lip. He had cut off his mustache.

"Do you know why I cut that off?"

I had a very good idea, but I shook my head. I was so frightened at his presence that I was afraid to hear my own voice.

I was wondering if the Governor and his men would ever find us where we then were. I was thinking of the time I might have to spend with this desperado. Of course, when they did not find me at the hotel, they would start a search.

Could I entertain my criminal companion until they discovered us? If not, then the five thousand dollars would be lost—and I so wanted that money. A trip to Europe the following summer crept into my thoughts even during those anxious moments.

The fellow seemed to be on the alert, looking about now and then. Finally, he answered his own question.

"I cut off my mustache to see if you would recognize me."

That sounded like a conundrum to me, and I forced myself to laugh a little. I knew why he had cut off that mustache as well as he. He unfastened a package from his saddle-horn and handed it to me.

"I am sure there is no mistake this time," he said. And then, hearing a wagon down the street: "Would you mind sitting inside the door with me just a few minutes? It's somewhat cooler in here, and I shall have to go away in a little while."

There was nothing for me to do but obey—for I considered it a command, not a request. I could almost see the gun in the belt under his coat—the outline was distinct—and I could hear a bullet catching up with me should I try to run away.

"We'll leave the door open," he said very courteously, noticing, I suppose, my timidity.

But he took good care to seat himself within the shadow. I wondered what in the world we could talk about, or why he wished so much to speak with me.

His first question rather surprised me.

"You write for the magazines, do you not?"

I nodded.

"The hotel clerk told you?" I asked, rather interested to know whence had come his information, and at the same time deciding to throw myself into the conversation.

He shook his head.

"No. I have read most everything you have written," he replied with a smile that wasn't at all desperado-like.

"Then, how did you know me?" I queried, this time truly eager to know.

The circumstance was a little out of the ordinary—that my writings should be known by a desperado.

"Yesterday was not the first time we have met," was his astonishing answer.

I looked at him in amazement.

"Have you forgotten?" he added.

"You must be mistaken," I replied.

"That's the reason I shaved my mustache. I didn't have it then—I mean, when we met for the first time."

"But when, where was this?"

"You were in the Indian Territory several years ago?"

"Yes, yes," I answered. "I was there, studying the Indians."

"And one day you were communing with nature and got too near the edge of a precipice. Do you remember?"

"Yes, yes."

"And a fellow happened along just in time to drag you back."

"Yes. The ground gave way beneath my feet. I felt myself slipping over. The scenery was so beautiful there that I was not aware I had approached so close to the brink. I clutched at the grass, but it came out by the roots. I screamed and slid farther down until I grasped a small bush.

"There I hung, with a drop below of a hundred feet into a raging mountain stream. Then the bush began to weaken under my weight. I strained my throat with my cries. Then I felt some one grasp my wrist and pull me to safety. When I came to, there was no one about. Was that person you?"

"As you fail to recognize me otherwise, I must admit it to establish my identity."

"But where did you go after bringing me to?"

"I didn't bring you to. I hadn't time. In pulling you back to firmer ground, I weakened my own footing. But I didn't stop at the small bush."

"Do you mean to say you went over the precipice?"

"I am ashamed to confess it—but I was more of a tenderfoot then than now."

"Were you badly hurt?"

"Couple of ribs—that's all. It laid me up for several weeks, and when I came round again you had gone away."

"I inquired of every one I knew if they had heard of any one who had rescued a girl and saved her life, but no one knew anything about it. Did you tell any one?"

"I wasn't very well known thereabouts. While I was in bed, I read in the paper that you were studying conditions among the Indians there; it also gave your picture. So, after that, I always read your stories and articles with a great deal of interest. You used that incident in one of them."

"Yes, I used that incident," I said.

It suddenly came back to me like a blow from a trip-hammer that this man before me, who had saved my life, was the man I was about to deliver into the hands of the law for five thousand dollars. I shuddered with shame.

"Then, when I saw you in Scarboro, I recognized you immediately," he went on. "I had grown a mustache and was tanned like an Indian, so you did not know me. Come to think of it, though, you never did see my face, did you? What an idiot I am! You fainted when I pulled you away from the brink of that precipice, and I didn't have time to stop and talk it over with you. So, Scarboro was really the first time we had come face to face."

I don't think I have ever listened to so pleasant a voice, but that is usually the way—the biggest villains are the smoothest talkers. But somehow I couldn't bring myself to associate crime with the man before me.

He appeared so gentle and kind, so appealing and handsome. And—he had saved my life.

"I have never thanked you," I said; "but I am going to do something for you now that will even matters. *I know who you are.*"

I had expected that this assertion would send him running to his horse, but he merely elevated his brows the same as I had done when he said he had met me before.

"So?" he replied; and I have never heard the word pronounced just as he pronounced it.

"Yes," I answered, rising, "and you must get away from here with the least possible delay. They know you are in town."

"Who?"

"The Governor and his men."

"Does the Governor know?"

"Yes."

"I wonder how he found out?"

"I told him."

"You? How did you know that the Governor—?"

"He told me all about it. But there isn't time to explain now. They may be here at any minute. They are now at the hotel. When they find I am not there, they will begin a search. Then you will be— Goodness, here they come! I'll

close the door. You can get out the back way. Run for it!"

"But I'm not afraid of the Governor and his men. As Romeo would say: 'Let them find me here. My life were better ended by their hate than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.'"

"What! You speak of love—you jest at such a time as this?"

"He jests at scars that never felt a wound."

"You'll feel many wounds shortly, I fear."

"You threw me a kiss from the rear of the train."

"It was a kiss of gratitude. I never expected to see you again. Please go while you have a chance."

"Chance? You speak as if—"

"Yes, yes; but go. You saved my life; now I'll save yours, if I can. Did you know there is a reward of five thousand dollars for you, dead or alive?"

"What!"

"Didn't you know it? Well, there is! But I don't want them to catch you. It is my fault that you are here now. I asked you to bring that laundry over to lead you into the trap of waiting officers. But I didn't know who you were then. Now, for pity's sake, please go. If you stay a moment more I can't be responsible."

The man was strangely calm—with death so near.

"You really don't want them to get me, then," he said. "Why?"

"Because you saved my life."

"Is that the only reason?"

"Yes."

"Don't you care just a little for me—not pity, something else? I do for you. I have loved you ever since that day on the precipice. Ever after that I have read your stories and loved you through them. Say something to me, please. Say you do care just a little. I don't want you to go away with me—to the mountains and live next to nature, to give up the luxuries of your life for the hardships of an outlaw's. Such things happen only in books. But I want to know truly: don't you care just a trifle—"

"If I didn't care for you, would I be urging you to escape?" I cried. "I have thought often and long of what the man must be like who had saved my

life—and I never knew. Now, when I find him— Oh, please go, please go. They are at the door. Speak lower. Why did you ever do such things?"

"What things?"

"Kill people and rob banks, and all that."

"I have never killed any one, nor have I ever robbed a bank."

"What! Then, why are they offering five thousand dollars for your capture?"

"I am sure I don't know. I hear them outside. Let's go out and ask them what I have done."

"Not that door!" I cried, for he was moving deliberately for the front of the schoolhouse. "Slip out the back way. Oh, it's too late! Don't shoot him; please don't shoot him!" I screamed, for they had pushed open the door in the search for me.

"If they do, I'll hang them," said the man with me, whom they were all shaking by the hand.

"I thought the Governor was with you," he said to the leader of the party.

Then came the explanations to my staring, interrogative expression of incredulity.

It appears that my unknown desperado was none other than the Governor's own son; that it had been partially his fault that Dandy Jim had escaped prison; and that my "laundry-man" had been carrying one of Dandy Jim's handkerchiefs, to help trace him by, until it had become so soiled that he had sent it with his own laundry to be washed and ironed.

He had started out to find Dandy Jim, and did not want the Governor to know that he had swerved from his purpose to fetch a girl her laundry—his father might fail to see the sentiment of the thing.

But what's the use of telling more. I am wearing my own waists these days, but I am sewing buttons on my desperado's shirts, while Dandy Jim's monogrammed handkerchief serves us as a doily. My husband captured the outlaw a month later, just to show his father he could do it, and then we took that trip to Europe.

MR. MAWSON ON THE PHONE.

By MABEL GERTRUDE DUNNING.

The singing-teacher's first pupil and what she said of his voice.

"MOTHER, I've just made an appointment with my first pupil."

Grace Hollings replaced the telephone-receiver on its hook and hurried into her mother's room.

Mrs. Hollings smiled up at her daughter, her busy hands still occupied with the sewing in her lap.

"Tell me all about it, dear. Who is the pupil, and when do you give your first lesson?"

"One question at a time, mother. You are as excited as I am. The pupil is a Mr. Mawson, and he is coming here at half past ten Thursday morning, when I am to try his voice and judge whether it would be worth while for him to study. He said he had just picked up one of my circulars at Cameron's, and liked the general tone of it so well that he called me up immediately. That's not doing

badly, considering that the circulars have only been out two days, is it, dearie?" and Grace settled herself in the big chair by the window.

"I only hope that it is the first of many applications to come; you have been very fortunate thus far," said the mother, looking with unconcealed pride at the girl in the chair.

Grace Hollings had just completed a teacher's course in one of the large conservatories of music.

To Grace, the subject was one of absorbing interest, and after four years of careful listening and attentive study she felt herself capable of starting her career as a teacher, and the advent of her first pupil was naturally an important event.

"Mother," she began suddenly, after an absorbed silence during which she had been gazing vacantly out of the window,

"let's not say anything about this to dad and Bob until after it's happened—especially to Bob, because he would probably find it a good subject for one of his practical jokes."

Grace had a wholesome fear of the pranks of her teasing brother, a student in the Brooklyn College, and whose greatest delight consisted in playing practical jokes upon his serious-minded sister. She needed humanizing, Bob said—humanizing in his code of life meaning "to be game for any sport."

"I think that a very good idea indeed," assented Mrs. Hollings, for she often sympathized secretly with her daughter when Bob had been especially annoying; and she was anxious that Grace should be at her best, for none knew better than she that nervousness is fatal to musical temperament.

During the next two days Grace often found herself wondering what the personality of her unknown pupil would be like, and when, at the appointed hour on Thursday morning, their one maid announced that Mr. Mawson was waiting in the music-room for Miss Grace, she fluttered nervously into the hall.

Hesitating at the top of the stairs long enough to assume the calm, unruffled dignity becoming an experienced teacher, she entered the music-room a moment later as though receiving pupils and trying voices had become part of her daily work.

Her quick eyes took in at a glance the general appearance of the man waiting for her. She observed that he was just like the hundred other American business men she met daily—quietly dressed, pleasantly reserved, and with the kindest eyes she had ever seen.

It was with an unconscious sense of relief that she found him older than she had been led to expect from listening to his voice over the telephone. Young men were apt to take things less seriously than those who have absorbed a sense of the fitness of things from contact with the world and other men.

As she appeared in the doorway, the man rose quickly to his feet and waited, smiling pleasantly, for her to speak, while Grace, with a pretty nod of her head and a quick turn of her hand, motioned him to be seated again, and settled herself in a deep chair opposite him.

"I hope you had no trouble finding me," she said brightly, having put him at his ease with a few words of greeting. "You said you lived in Manhattan, and this street is rather hard to find when one is not familiar with this part of the city."

"Oh, I've been out this way before—some years ago. My sense of location is so well developed that I had no trouble," answered Mawson, leaning forward in his chair. "But, please, I must not take too much of your valuable time; so perhaps I had better explain just why I made this appointment with you."

"I am passionately fond of music, Miss Hollings, and have ambitions to sing. To be quite frank with you, I think I have talent, but I do not know whether I have voice enough to be worth training, because unless I can earn enough with it some day at least to pay for the training I am afraid singing-lessons would be a luxury I could not afford."

"I would like to have you try me, and tell me just what you think my prospects as a singer seem to be."

"And you will believe what I tell you after I have heard you sing?" questioned Grace, watching him with surprise.

"Yes; judging from your circulars, I think you know your subject thoroughly, and can easily tell me whether I am worth teaching," he returned calmly.

Grace rose from her chair and moved nearer the piano in the center of the room.

"You trust much to my honesty," she said, with a curious glance in his direction.

"Yes, because you have honesty to trust," was his unexpected rejoinder.

She flashed a comprehending look toward him.

"Where did he learn that?" she wondered.

Mawson followed her to the piano, and waited silently while she cleared the music from the rack and seated herself before the instrument.

"I did not bring anything with me to sing, Miss Hollings," he volunteered, anticipating her question.

"That does not matter. Just sing a few tones for me," and, playing a simple scale exercise for him, she waited for him to sing it.

With a deep throb of disappointment, she listened. His voice was an ordinary tenor—hopelessly ordinary, she thought regretfully. All her pleasant plans for her first pupil fell to the ground, for she could never tell him that he had a future as a singer.

She played on mechanically while he sang, tempted for a moment to deceive him and tell him his voice was exceptionally good. She needed pupils so badly, and her mother would be so disappointed at her failure to secure him; but she remembered he had said he could not afford to study unless he could earn money with his voice, and she was suddenly angry with herself for even thinking such a thing.

The tinkling of the telephone-bell upstairs recalled her to her duty, and, finishing the scale that Mawson was singing, she lifted her hands from the keys and turned slowly toward him.

He was smilingly watching her, and, as he met her eyes, said brightly:

"Well, what is the verdict?"

Grace moved uneasily along the bench. She hated to tell him he was hopeless as a singer, he looked at her with such frank, pleasant eyes; but he had insisted on the truth, and she would tell it, even if it were unpleasant.

"Mr. Mawson, you want me to tell you exactly what my opinion is?"

He nodded his assent.

"Well, I think you have a very pleasant tenor voice, but I don't think it would pay you to have it trained, for you never could do any serious work with it. It is too small, although the quality is pleasing. I am sure you could not get an engagement with it, unless it were for charity. I am very sorry, but that is what I honestly think."

As Grace finished speaking, she turned inquiringly to the maid, who stood discreetly just outside the door.

"Well, Anna, what is it?" she asked.

"Telephone for you, Miss Grace," was the answer.

"Don't let me detain you, Miss Hollings," Mawson broke in. "I half expected your decision, and therefore I'm not too dreadfully disappointed; but I do want to thank you for taking the time to bother with me, and for giving me your honest opinion. I'll just hurry along, and

not keep you from the phone any longer," he went on as he followed Grace into the hall, "and let me thank you again for your kindness."

Grace opened the door for him.

"Please do not say anything about my kindness; it's my business to do what I've done this morning."

"Well, you've done your duty nobly this day," was his answer as he started down the steps.

Closing the door quickly, Grace hurried up the stairs to the phone. Stopping only long enough to catch her breath, she lifted the receiver to her ear.

"Hello!"

"Hello! Is that you, Grace?" It was her brother Bob's voice.

"Yes, this is Grace. What do you want, Bob?"

"How did you like Mr. Mawson's voice?" laughed Bob's voice at the other end of the wire.

"Mr. Mawson? How did you know he was coming? Did mother tell you?"

A teasing laugh was the only answer.

"Well, he didn't have an awfully good voice, but he was very pleasant."

"What!" Bob's voice was filled with surprise.

"He just left as you called up," added Grace.

"What are you joshing about, Grace? Who just left?"

"Why, Mr. Mawson."

"Grace, do you mean to say some one came this morning calling himself Mr. Mawson?"

"Of course. Why do you ask such questions?"

"Good Heavens, old girl, there isn't any Mr. Mawson! It was I who called you up the other day. Dick Reed and I thought it would be a good joke on you to make you think you had a pupil, and then put you wise this morning. We were only going to jolly you a bit."

"Oh, Bob, what have you done? The idea of your playing such a cruel joke at my expense, anyway! Who could the man be? He certainly called himself Mr. Mawson, and he spoke of our conversation over the phone. Did any one else know of your intended prank?"

"Not a soul."

"Well, we'll have to wait and see what happens. I'm not going to say anything

about it to mother just yet, because it would only worry her needlessly. I hope this will be a lesson to you, Bob. Good-by."

"Good-by," came meekly from Bob.

Luckily Mrs. Hollings had gone out to spend the day with a friend, so Grace was not obliged to explain her worried and nervous state of mind. She was utterly at a loss to account for the appearance of the mysterious Mr. Mawson, and when Bob returned from school she demanded a full explanation of the whole plot.

But all Bob could tell her was that he had been talking with Dick Reed about her plan to teach, and had shown him one of her circulars, when the idea suddenly occurred to him to call her up and make her think that he was a Mr. Mawson, who wanted to study with her. He and Dick had thought it would be a great joke, but now he was darned sorry, and wished he had let her alone.

Plainly Bob—careless, teasing Bob—was worried, for neither he nor Dick had breathed a word of their plot to any one, and the advent of Mr. Mawson seemed almost uncanny to Bob.

For the next three days the two waited anxiously for results from Mr. Mawson's visit. Just what results they expected neither could explain, although Grace, watching her brother closely, was sure he expected something dire to happen.

His exuberant young spirits were quite subdued, and Grace felt positive that in the future she was safe from any more practical jokes of her brother's invention.

On the morning of the fourth day after Mr. Mawson's call the mail brought Grace a small businesslike letter, requesting her to present herself at the office of the National Institute of Art and Music some time that day.

Somewhat surprised, Grace was undecided what to do. Since Thursday morning either Bob or she had contrived to be in the house, but now Bob was at school, and she could not make up her mind whether to stay at home or leave her mother and Anna alone, and answer the letter in person. She wondered why she had been sent for, and thought possibly she had been recommended by the directors of her own conservatory for a position as assistant teacher in the

National Institute. If such was the case, it was too good a chance to lose, and, after a few moments' deliberation, she decided to go.

The National Institute was familiar ground to Grace, for she had been there many times for concerts and recitals, so that she easily found her way to the office, which was hidden away on the second floor of the building.

Explaining her business to the clerk at the desk, she was directed to the room of Prosper Lansing, at the other end of the long hall. The name struck familiarly on her ear as that of the director of the vocal department, of whom she had heard much but never seen.

The man seated before the one desk in the room glanced up inquiringly as the door opened, and, seeing Grace on the threshold, he rose smiling, with outstretched hand.

But she, consternation plainly visible on her features, remained standing near the door, stammering with surprise, "Mr. Mawson!"

"No, not Mr. Mawson," he began, with quiet amusement—"Mr. Lansing. I am afraid I owe you all kinds of apologies, Miss Hollings, but if you will come in and sit down I will explain everything to you."

"Explain?" repeated Grace, as she moved forward mechanically to take the chair pushed toward her by Mr. Lansing.

"I can see that you are dreadfully confused about all this, Miss Hollings, and perhaps I had better tell you everything at once. I do not know whether you know it or not, but I am teaching composition and theory at the Brooklyn College. The other morning I was looking for some statements in the large office, when two students came in—your brother and his chum, Reed.

"I knew them both, because they are in my classes. I was behind one of the cabinets, where of course they did not see me, and I went on with my search until your brother's conversation caught my attention.

"He was showing Reed one of your circulars and telling him what a good joke it would be to call you up and make you think you had a pupil. The thought no sooner entered his head than it had to be executed, and they used the phone on the

desk before them, and succeeded in making the appointment. They left the room convulsed with laughter at the success of their joke, not knowing that I had overheard them."

Mr. Lansing paused for a moment as Grace jumped to her feet, her eyes flashing with anger.

"And you made the joke a little more pleasant by keeping the appointment yourself? You should have let Bob and Dick know; they would have enjoyed it immensely, and it would have saved much unnecessary worrying on Bob's part," she concluded scornfully.

"You are quite right to be angry, but you have not heard all. I did not meet the appointment to carry on the joke, but for a real reason. Your brother, in talking to Reed, spoke laughingly of your seriousness in regard to teaching.

"He was amused at your honest, fair-minded view of your duty. In this institute we need a competent teacher to direct the girls' classes and examine the voices occasionally. The teacher who fills this position must be absolutely fearless in her demonstration of what is her honest opinion of the voices in her care, or she is useless to us.

"I had been searching vainly for such a person when I heard your brother's plot,

and just as suddenly as he had thought of his joke so suddenly the thought came to me—why not go over and see that girl as Mr. Mawson, and find out if she is what I am looking for?

"Perhaps that was an unconventional way of doing things, but aren't we musicians allowed to be unconventional? I was delighted with your truthful decision of my fate as a singer, and could see that your art was a serious thing to you—that you were ready to give your best to your pupils.

"And now, Miss Hollings, I should be most happy if you would accept the position I have mentioned in this institute," he concluded.

Grace looked at him in stupefied surprise.

"But I am absolutely unknown here, and haven't a bit of former experience to recommend me for such a responsible position," she protested.

"Please let me be the judge of that. I at least have enough experience to know that you are just the person needed here," answered Mr. Lansing with conviction.

As she left the institute, a signed factor of the famous establishment, Grace smiled softly to herself as she pictured Bob's face when he should learn the identity of Mr. Mawson.

A DOG-DAY INDEED.

By MARVIN DANA.

How chance threw fifty dollars into the lap of a starving man, who made a present of it unknowingly, and then took desperate chances in the recovery of the same.

JOHN MARTIAL was very, very hungry.

Time had been—and not long ago—when he would have rejoiced in an appetite so insistent, but that was when he was the happy possessor of money sufficient to buy many meals. Now, alas! he had not the wherewithal to purchase a penny bun at a street-stand.

His last nickel had gone at noon for a plate of bread and soup in a restaurant of the cheapest sort. That insufficient meal was a thing of the past by six hours, as the aching void of his stomach bore clamorous witness.

Now, as Martial sat on a bench in Central Park, he wondered just how long a time was required for the starving to death of a healthy man, thirty-five years old.

Martial's attention was momentarily diverted from his misery by the appearance of a man and dog that had come to a stop opposite his bench. The man was dirty and ill-kempt, with an evil face marked by a projecting jaw, and beady, shifting eyes.

"A crook of the cheap kind," was Martial's mental comment. "And the dog's a mate for him!"

The creature did indeed look as vicious as its master, and equally unsavory, in its rough and grimy yellow coat. It was undoubtedly a mongrel of the worst sort, with enough of fighting blood in the mixed strains to render it savage against the world in general.

The owner of the dog cast a furtive eye roundabout to make sure that no policeman was near, and then unstrapped the leading-chain from the brute's collar. The mongrel hound—for such it was in size—instantly made a rush at a squirrel, which escaped up a tree, whence it chattered defiance.

The dog looked about for some other victim of its vindictiveness. Fifty yards away a bull-terrier was trotting across the greensward. The hound bristled and charged, unheeding its master's sharp command.

The terrier faced about as the enemy bore down on it, and a second later the two were a snarling, snapping bunch, twisting wildly over the turf. The owner of the hound darted toward the fray, but paused a rod or so off, and stood watching with a complacent grin.

That villainous smirk of satisfaction angered Martial, who had approached, and his rage mounted as he saw the cause; the mongrel was clearly the superior in the fight; it was only a question of moments till the beast would throttle its smaller adversary.

"Pull off your dog!" Martial commanded. "Can't you see the brute will kill that terrier?"

"Pull him off yourself, if you want to," the other jeered. "No mix-in for mine. Bruiser ain't no joke when his mad's up."

But Martial gave no heed to the warning. Instead, he sprang forward to where the two dogs were writhing in combat.

For a moment he could distinguish nothing but a whirl of fur. Then suddenly a blot of yellow shot toward him, and he recognized the haunches of the mongrel.

Instantly he caught the two hind legs in his hands and tugged with his whole strength.

There was some strain of bulldog in the mongrel, but not enough to make its grip relentless, for as it felt the wrench

from behind, it loosed its jaws from the terrier, and bent to seize on the new adversary. But a well-directed kick repulsed the attack.

Undaunted, it charged again, but a second kick reached its head and sent it sprawling. When it regained its feet it had turned craven and ran to the protection of its master.

The man had been volleying curses at Martial for his interference, but he had not resorted to other violence than that of words. His nature differed from the mongrel's in that he fought only when he was forced to it.

Martial had paid no attention to the fellow's shout hitherto, but now he suddenly became aware of what was being said to him, and he straightened from bending over the terrier.

"See here, you!" he ordered sharply. "Shut up, and get out—quick!"

The man began a profane reply, but Martial interrupted.

"There's a policeman in sight now," he said significantly. "If you don't clear out with that cur of yours I'll call him."

"But I hain't done nothin'," the man protested.

"I'm not so sure of that," Martial retorted, as he observed the fellow's uneasy glance in the direction of the officer. "Anyhow, it's against the law to allow your dog at large. Get out!"

The man, who had been studying the terrier with a knowing eye, moved away reluctantly, after fastening the chain to the mongrel's collar. But he had not gone six steps when he paused and addressed Martial with an ingratiating whine:

"Say, bo, I'm sorry the terrier got chewed up. Guess I'd better take him home and 'tend to him."

"Oh, get out," Martial snapped. "You'd like to feed him to that ugly brute of yours!"

"Honest to goodness," the man urged, "I'd fix him up good. I know a lot about dogs."

"About stealing them probably."

"'Tain't your dog, anyhow," the other returned sullenly. Then again he became conciliatory. "You let me have him, bo. I'll take him home and fix him up fine."

"Get out, or I'll call that policeman," was the reply.

But the man persisted.

"Maybe, when he's cured, I could sell him for a dollar or two."

"He's worth a good deal more than that," Martial declared, "but not to you—because you won't get him. Clear out!"

"Perhaps you're on the make yourself," the man suggested with a sneer.

"Perhaps I am," Martial agreed.

"If so be," the man continued, "I'll give you a dollar and take him off your hands. Huh?"

For a moment there was silence between the two. At the suggestion of money, Martial forgot the excitement of the dog-fight and his rescue of the terrier; he remembered only the fierce hunger that clutched him.

A dollar! Oh, the food a dollar would purchase! And he had but to hold forth his hand and it would be his.

Then his eyes fell on the terrier, lying panting on the grass beside him, flecked here and there with blood. His gaze shifted to the savage mongrel, and then sought the leering face of its master.

He looked straight into the beady eyes as he spoke:

"My patience is at an end. Be off!"

The finality of his tone overcame the man's persistence, and he shambled away muttering vindictively. Martial picked up the terrier gently and carried it to the bench, where an examination proved that the animal was not seriously injured.

"Well, pup," he remarked as the grateful creature licked his hand fondly, "you seem to be up against it like myself. Where do you belong, anyhow? You look pretty well kept. You must have had a home somewhere—you're no tramp dog, that's certain. Where did you come from, eh?"

The dog recognized the friendliness in the tone, and wagged its stump of tail eagerly, the while it crowded closer to Martial on the bench, whining softly by way of answer.

"No, you're no common or garden mutt, even if you did come out without your collar on. Jove! it's a wonder you haven't been gathered in before this. The papers say that all wandering bow-wows are doomed. Did you know that, pup? Now, if that policeman should stroll this way, he might—ah, I have an

idea. The belt is superfluous with this cut of trousers."

He unbuckled the leather belt from his waist and passed it around the dog's neck. Then he took out his knife, cut off the unnecessary length, and pierced a hole for the tongue, and so buckled it about the dog's neck. Thus adapted, the belt made an excellent collar.

"Now you look really respectable," Martial remarked as he surveyed his work with satisfaction, "and I guess you can linger alongside of me without any danger of being nabbed. Jove! I wonder if you're hungry, pup. I am. And what to do? There's the rub!"

Martial forgot the dog in gloomy meditation. In truth, he was, as he put it to himself, in "a thundering fix." The desperate nature of his situation was made the more unendurable in that it threatened to overwhelm him just as the triumph of his hopes seemed close at hand.

Though penniless to-day, money in abundance would be his could he but hold out for a week or so longer. At the end of seven years' striving in the wilds, fortune was finally almost in his grasp, and yet he could not draw it closer, for now others were concerned; he must await their action. It was this enforced waiting that threatened disaster.

Profiting by the experience he had gained as a mining-engineer, Martial had put the bulk of his savings into the purchase of a mine. He was certain of the investment's worth—certain, too, that he could easily secure the capital necessary for its development. It was for this that he had come to New York.

But the task had proved more formidable than he anticipated. There had remained to him after the purchase only a few hundred dollars for the expenses of this trip. Little by little this had vanished as negotiations were prolonged. His room, luckily, had been paid for by the month in advance, and for a week still would be his. But otherwise things were at their worst.

Already he had been forced to pawn his valuables, one by one, to buy food. And to-day, at last, he was absolutely penniless—and very hungry.

"And it's not my fault, at that," Martial reflected; "it's just a stroke of the worst sort of luck."

In this opinion he was justified by the fact that, after many failures, he had finally succeeded in convincing certain capitalists of the mine's merits, and the terms of bargain had been agreed on. Already, the financiers had sent a trusted expert to make his investigations into the prospective value of the property on the spot.

On the receipt of a favorable report from this man the deal would be closed immediately, and Martial would find himself the possessor of a considerable sum in cash, with plenty more to come in the future.

He knew that the report would be a glowing one. Most unfortunately, in the meantime he was set face to face with starvation!

Puzzle as he would, he could hit on no means of relief. He was a stranger in New York; he had been born and educated in the West—this was indeed his first visit East. For that matter, his years of going to and fro had prevented his forming close friendships with any one who was in a position to help him in this emergency. He was without relatives, and all of his property had been put into the mine.

Were he to go to the men with whom he was negotiating and ask their aid, it was likely that their suspicions would be aroused by his story, and this would cause the delay, if not the final failure even, of his hopes.

A movement on the part of the dog snuggled against him attracted Martial's attention, and he patted the creature affectionately. The grateful terrier licked his hand, and looked up into his face with eyes of devotion.

"Somehow, you seem a bit familiar to me," Martial said reflectively. "You're a well-marked little beast, too. Curious how you look so much like some other dog I've known. But, then, most terriers look more or less alike. You've got just the same markings as that puppy I gave Grace."

And then, straightway, Martial again forgot all else in the misery of his thoughts, for the mention of the girl's name brought home to his consciousness the fear that all this day he had been secretly fighting—fear lest he lose the most precious of all his hopes, Grace.

During one of his visits to Denver, he had met Miss Hemenway, the only child of the railway magnate. He fell deeply in love with her, and in the end he won her heart. But the girl's father interposed a barrier of sound sense between the lovers.

"When you've proved that you amount to something you can have her," he announced to the suitor, "and not till then. I'll give you two years. But, in the meantime, don't be dangling about her. She may come across a better man, if you're out of the way. However, of course, there's really no danger of her falling in love with anybody else—if she loves you as much as she thinks she does, eh?"

Mr. Hemenway paused to chuckle cynically.

"Understand now," he continued with a return to severity, "you are to go away from her and leave her alone until you can return with a fair amount of money or a position that means something, to show your worth. I don't propose to leave Grace to the mercy of an incompetent. Show me that you're a real man, and you can have her. Meanwhile, as I have said, you must leave her alone—no visits whatever, no letters even. Do you agree?"

And Martial had agreed, very sorrowful at thought of separation from his love, but buoyed up by the hope of high achievement.

That was eighteen months ago. He had done his best. At last he was on the eve of triumph, for success in the negotiations on which he was engaged meant the fulfilling of the condition imposed by Mr. Hemenway. But now, almost in the moment of victory, a petty, sordid lack of a few dollars threatened total wreck.

"And their expert is taking it at his leisure out there," Martial groaned, "while I'm being ruined here. Heavens! if his report were only here now! How hungry I am!"

He made an impatient movement, and the dog, which had been dozing, sat up, somewhat stiffly, and blinked at him fondly. But Martial remained oblivious of all dogs.

He was trying his best to oust the fear that beset him so sorely, and hold cour-

age fast in its stead. With sudden energy, he addressed himself aloud, as the habit is with those who have been long in solitude:

"Jack, my boy, you're not dead yet. Now, what on earth ails the dog?"

For the terrier had given one joyous yelp and then leaped into the young man's lap, licking his face in a transport of canine happiness.

Martial defended himself as best he could from the affectionate assaults, but it was some time before the creature's excitement died down and the young man was vastly puzzled by the outburst.

"Regular fit of tenderness," he mused.

"But why? Must have been some reason for that outbreak. But what? Everything was tranquil—and then, without a mite of warning, this heart-fit. Curious! I was just saying to myself"—unconsciously, he again spoke aloud—"Jack, my boy, brace up!" Lordy! he's at it again!"

For the dog had, indeed, jumped upon him in another gust of fondness.

"This has me beaten," Martial confessed finally, when the terrier had returned to tranquillity, and he stared at the dog in great bewilderment, until suddenly aroused by a voice addressing him.

He then became aware, for the first time, that a woman had seated herself on the other end of the bench. She was, perhaps, sixty years of age, and well dressed, and she was regarding the man and dog with evident curiosity.

"Your dog seems very affectionate," she said, rather doubtfully. "But isn't he dirty; and isn't that blood on him, young man?"

"Why, yes, there is some blood on him," Martial admitted; "and he's a trifle dirty. But he's been in a fight."

"You ought not to let him fight," the woman retorted severely.

"I didn't," Martial protested. "A vicious mongrel pounced on him, and I pulled him off."

The woman's frown relaxed, but she still spoke reprovingly:

"Well, I should think you'd take him right home, and attend to him."

To which Martial replied, with a horrible sense of embarrassment: "You see, madam, he's not my dog."

"Not your dog!"

"No," he repeated.

A flush burned on his bearded face as he went on: "He seems to be lost. I've been wondering what to do with him. The way I'm situated just now I can't very well keep a dog," he concluded grimly.

"Aren't his name and address on the collar?" the woman demanded, with much interest. "As he has a collar on, he must belong to somebody."

Martial explained the origin of the collar, and why he had bestowed it. The woman regarded him approvingly.

"Is he a good dog?" she questioned abruptly.

"Why, yes," Martial answered judicially. "He shows good blood. Yes, he's a good dog."

"Do you think he would bark at a burglar?" the woman asked sharply.

"Certainly," Martial answered, and laughed. "Nip him, too, for that matter."

"It's no laughing matter," the woman declared tartly. "There have been half a dozen houses robbed right in my block. Do you think he'd bark and give warning, if I tied him in our back-yard? They have torn down the building right next door to me, so there's nothing to hinder anybody from coming up to my back-yard on that side. I never have had a dog, but I guess I could stand one in the back-yard. Goodness knows, something's needed. The police don't help any. Are you sure he'd bark?"

"Yes, indeed," Martial averred gravely. He welcomed the opportunity for bestowing the waif where it would be cared for.

The elderly woman was plainly none too amiable of disposition, but the dog would be safe from being seized and put to death, which was what the law held out for such strays; and it would be fed, a luxury which Martial could not provide.

"You'd find him a good protector, madam," he urged.

"Well," the woman said hesitatingly, "I've a notion to try him. But how can I get him home?"

"Do you live near here?"

"Yes—East Sixtieth Street, beyond Madison."

"I'll take him along for you," Martial

volunteered. "My stick will do for a leash."

He hooked the curved handle of his cane into the dog's collar, and stood up. The terrier jumped down from the bench, rather awkwardly, for it was lame from the fray.

"He'll be all right to-morrow morning," Martial apologized.

Then, he and the dog stood waiting.

The woman got up, and surveyed the pair almost suspiciously.

"Well, I guess I'll risk it," she said.

She turned to the east, and walked briskly away, without a single backward glance. Behind her trudged meekly the hungry man and the limping dog.

From the screen of a clump of bushes, a hundred yards to the westward, an evil face peered after the trio. Close by squatted a yellow mongrel hound. And presently, when the three were far enough away for safety, the man with the cur came out into the path and slouched furtively in their wake.

The woman soon reached her own doorstep, and bade Martial await her on it, while she entered in quest of a rope. The young man obeyed patiently, though he felt some resentment at the apparent suspicion with which he was regarded in return for his charitable efforts on the dog's behalf.

Yet he could hardly wonder at the woman's attitude toward him, for the feeling that he was a pauper had given him a guilty self-consciousness, when he spoke of being unable to keep the dog. This the woman had observed, and she would never guess the true cause of it, for there was nothing poverty-stricken as yet in Martial's garb, though he had pawned all but the suit he stood in.

The terrier's new mistress returned presently with a piece of clothes-line, which she fastened to the collar. The dog was reluctant to part from Martial, but the young man, after patting the creature's head, said good-by, and turned away, whereupon the woman promptly dragged the animal into the hall and shut the door.

"He'll get something to eat—lucky chap!" Martial murmured dolefully. "Well, I might as well go back to the park and sit there. It's too early to go to bed, and I'm more likely to see something

in the park to distract my mind from my stomach than I would in my room. How hungry I am!"

II.

IN the park again, Martial fell to thinking of the dog, and renewed his puzzling over the volcanic outburst of caresses that had twice startled him. Then, of a sudden, an illuminating thought came:

"It was when I spoke to myself, and said, 'Jack, old boy'—that set him off. And the other time, too, I repeated my name, 'Jack,' and the beggar went wild. That must be his name—Jack. Huh! Fate evidently meant our destinies to mingle—same name, both up against it, brought together thus. Well, I'm glad he's bettered himself. I'll take that as a good augury."

A minute later he ejaculated:

"Why, that bull-terrier pup I gave Grace is named 'Jack.' She said she was going to call it after me. And, by Jove! he had the same markings as this terrier—that patch over the right eye. That's the reason the dog looked familiar to me somehow. And the age—why, that would just fit. This dog looked exactly as that pup I gave her must look by this time. I wonder now—"

He paused, and stared for a moment at the sunset.

"No; of course not," he resumed. "It couldn't be—certainly not. And yet he's the image of what her dog must be. Oh, well, the idea's absurd—that's all."

But Martial could not rid himself of the fancy.

"Just to think," he murmured, "if he were really her Jack, he'd have been with her all this while; he'd have seen her, touched her, since I have! Why, if he belonged to her—Pooh! I'm getting light-headed. Shows the bad effects of starving on the wits.

"But, all the same, if this Jack didn't belong to her, he must have belonged to somebody. That somebody has evidently lost him. And he's not the kind of dog any one would lose intentionally. What a fool I am! Perhaps the owner has advertised—offered a reward—and I starving, and gave away the dog to a woman who didn't even say, 'Thank you.'"

The excitement of these thoughts was too much for Martial's calm in his fasting condition. He sprang up, and walked away hastily, still reviling his folly.

He had abandoned all speculations as to the identity of the wanderer fitting that of the pup he had presented to Grace Hemenway. He was absorbed in bitter reflections that possibly he had had within his grasp a means of securing money—money that would buy food.

He remembered the dirty owner of the yellow mongrel, and the proffered dollar. The fellow had perceived the possibilities, and sought to seize them, while he had been a fool and thrown them away.

Only one thing could relieve the keenness of his regret, and that was the knowledge that, after all, the loss of the terrier was not advertised. In that event, his stupidity had not robbed him.

To settle this point, he must consult the daily papers, and here again he was in despair, for he remembered that money is required for even the cheapest purchase. Then it occurred to him that he would find files of the leading dailies in any hotel, and he forthwith hurried to the nearest.

In the reading-room there, the first paper he picked up displayed the following advertisement, in the "Lost" column:

Lost—A bull-terrier, two years old, black markings, patch over right eye; answers to the name of Jack. A reward of fifty dollars will be paid for his return to 28A East Fifty-Sixth Street.

Martial sank into a chair, the prey of racking emotion. His trembling hand could scarcely hold the paper, while he stared with starting eyeballs at the printed words.

"Answers to the name of Jack. A reward of fifty dollars will be paid for his return."

Fifty dollars! And he starving! Fifty dollars! And he had thrown the chance away!

Martial choked back something that was almost a sob. He was very, very hungry, and a hungry man sometimes loses his self-control when things seem hopeless. However, he mastered himself to the extent necessary for avoiding outward signs of his emotion, and then presently found himself fast in the clutch

of a dominant idea: He must get back the dog!

That resolve took complete possession of him. Thus, and thus only, could he gain the fifty dollars that would mean salvation. He must get back the dog; there was no other way.

For the time being he almost forgot the stinging hunger that gnawed within him, while he considered ways and means.

The simplest course, it occurred to him, was to demand the return of the terrier from the woman. But he at once dismissed this idea.

From what he already knew of her, it was probable that she would refuse his request. Her suspicions, already aroused, might easily be increased. Indeed, she might turn him over to the police as a questionable character. Or she might take a notion to move the dog from the yard into the house, to insure its safety.

Such a course would prove fatal to Martial's hopes, for he was not minded to take the direful hazard of breaking into the woman's house. But the scaling of a back-yard fence seemed a much less heinous matter—almost a trivial thing when it alone stood between a hungry man and fifty dollars.

He determined on the attempt. He would wait until such an hour as would doubtless find all the household asleep, and then endeavor to achieve the theft of that which was justly his own.

As he reviewed the situation, Martial became confident of success. He had observed the fact of which the woman had spoken: that one of the buildings adjoining her house had been torn down. There would be, then, only the yard-fence to bar him from the dog. Nor did he fear lest the latter would give an alarm by barking. The chances were that the terrier would recognize him, if he called Jack softly in warning of his approach.

Anyhow, every risk must be taken, for beyond them all waited fifty dollars—money for food!

The delaying until midnight was a dragging torture. Martial tried to read the papers, and strolled aimlessly from one hotel to another, but he could never rid himself of the sharp craving from the empty stomach, and along with it was the mental suffering inevitable to one in his situation.

Finally, at eleven o'clock, he could bear the suspense no longer, but set forth at a rapid pace up Fifth Avenue toward Sixtieth Street.

When Martial arrived near the house, he paused to reconnoiter. The night, fortunately for his purpose, was heavily overcast. In the vacant lot where the building had been torn down was deep shadow, and back farther dense blackness. There were no lights visible in the front part of the woman's house, and, after watching for a while, to make sure that no one was at hand to observe his movements, Martial slipped from the dim illumination of the street into the shadows of the open space next the house wall.

He followed this stealthily, advancing slowly into the blackness, until his sense of touch warned him that he had reached the fence that shut in the back-yard. This was tightly boarded, as he made out by running his hand up and down it, but the top was within easy reach, and it offered but a slight obstacle to his trained muscles.

In the excitement of his undertaking Martial had now forgotten hunger, and for the time being was again the possessor of his full strength. So, after a glance at the back windows of the house, to assure himself that these also were dark, he laid hold on the top of the fence, and drew himself up slowly and noiselessly.

The effort taxed his muscles, and the sweat broke out on his forehead, but he persevered. It would have been easy to mount, with a spring and a jerk, in a second, but that method would have made a noise, which must surely startle the dog into barking. By this slower and more laborious procedure, Martial hoped to mount without disturbing the terrier, and descend with equal quietness into the yard. Then he would try to attract the dog's attention by repeating his name softly. At the worst, in case of an uproar, he could, he believed, get safely away.

With these plannings ready to his need, he found himself at last astride the top of the fence.

Martial rested for a moment, and listened. There was no sound from the yard. He had thought he might locate the dog by some movement on its part, but nothing disturbed the silence. Nor

could he make out anything by peering into the darkness beneath him.

Without more ado, he swung himself cautiously down. His feet struck something soft that yielded beneath them. Then, before he could guess at what had happened, his legs were clutched as in a vise.

At that, he loosed his hold on the fence and, as he dropped, struck with all his strength into the blackness, in an effort to overcome this unseen foe. His fists met the warm resilience of living flesh. The next second he was rolling on the ground, and realized that he was engaged in a desperate, almost noiseless, struggle with another man.

For neither Martial nor his mysterious antagonist uttered any cry. The only sounds were the hissing of their breaths, and the beating of their bodies on the packed earth of the yard, as they rolled about in their strife.

Even in the confusion of the combat, Martial wondered that this noise, slight as it was, did not set the terrier to barking, but the new watch-dog was recreant to his post. But he forgot the dog and all else save fighting, when a strong hand closed on his throat, strangling him.

For a moment he strove in vain; then he broke from the grip and, somehow in the blackness, twisted clear and sprang to his feet. The other rose at the same time, and instantly they were again locked in the struggle.

But now Martial managed to catch his enemy's wrist and, using a trick of attack with which he was familiar, twisted it with all his strength, and at the same time entwined his other arm about the man's neck, and put forth all his strength.

The other's free hand caught Martial's throat again, but the strain on his sinews was too great. As Martial summoned all his energy for a final effort, the man went limp, in his grasp, and fell heavily where the victor threw him.

Martial leaned against the fence, gasping for breath. Now that the battle was over, he was so weak that he could hardly stand, and trembled violently.

Again he wondered at the silence of the dog, and his heart sank as it occurred to him that perhaps after all the woman had decided to keep the terrier in the house. In any event, he must not delay.

He knew that the man he had vanquished would soon recover consciousness and strength, while he himself was in no condition to renew the fight.

He stared about and listened, and became convinced that the faint sounds of the struggle had not attracted attention. He determined to risk the striking of a match.

The night was still, and the little light burned clearly. At once he perceived the terrier, lying a few feet away, motionless, sprawling, and dismay seized him.

"It's a burglar, and he began by killing the dog!"

This meant the ruin of his hopes. In his rage, he rather wished that he had killed the miscreant who had thus robbed him of his chance for food. Instinctively he turned toward the object of his wrath, and stooped over the huddled figure.

The match scorched his fingers and went out, but not before he had recognized the face. A little murmur of amazement escaped him, and he stood agape in the darkness. For this was the ill-kempt master of the mongrel hound.

Martial could not understand this new aspect of the situation. The coincidence was startling that the man should have chanced on this particular house for robbery.

"If he had come to steal the dog, I could understand it," Martial mused. "But he didn't. He killed it as a preliminary precaution before trying to enter the house."

Then, a new thought led him hurriedly to strike another match, and bend over the terrier.

A moment's examination sufficed. The dog was not dead, merely unconscious, and Martial's heart leaped with joy.

"The villain did come to steal the dog," he reflected. "He doped him somehow. He said he knew all about dogs. Such knowledge is part of the stock in trade of a dog-thief. And then, before he could get away, I dropped down on him out of the sky. Well, I'll just finish this bit of dog stealing myself, and leave my partner in crime to recover at his leisure."

Elated by this new hope of success, Martial picked up the limp body of the terrier and made his way to the fence. With what gentleness he could, he bal-

anced the unconscious creature across the top and then scrambled over.

Then, he again took the dog into his arms, and followed the house wall till he reached the street. With the terrier tucked under his arm, he set forth boldly for his room.

Perhaps, one or two of those he passed on the way wondered as to what ailed the dog that it must be carried. But Martial had no concern with such curiosity. He was listening to a refrain that sounded gloriously in answer to every cry of his hunger, the refrain that meant his salvation—fifty dollars reward!

III.

MARTIAL left the terrier's recovery to nature, and he was not disappointed. When morning came it found him pale beneath his heavy beard, and wofully weak from fasting, but the dog was apparently in the best of health and spirits.

What it may have thought of the mysterious change from the back-yard where it had gone to sleep, to this room where it awoke, will never be known, but it was plain that it recognized the young man as its protector, and regarded him with affection. And Martial, in grateful recognition of the service the dog was about to render him, returned its caresses.

At nine o'clock he rang the bell at 28A East Fifty-Sixth Street. With him, at the crooked end of the walking-stick, was the terrier, still wearing the collar that had been a belt.

The door was opened by a maid, who at sight of the terrier gave vent to a joyous shriek.

"It's the dog!" she cried shrilly.

Evidently this was the Jack desired at No. 28A. The servant's recognition left no doubt on this score. And, if more proof were needed, the dog itself suddenly supplied it, for Jack now lunged forward so violently that Martial, at the other end of the cane, found himself scrambling from the vestibule into the hall. He went gaily, jubilant, for now he was assured of his fifty dollars' reward!

Once inside, however, he had the presence of mind to slip the hook of the stick from the collar. Then he stood petrified—the impossible had come to pass!

There came a sound of light steps running down the hall, a little shriek, a bark, of ecstasy from the terrier—and the happy dog was in the arms of a girl who knelt on the floor uttering low cries of delight, in which was breathed again and again the name "Jack."

And Martial stared wildly, his heart in his eyes, for the girl was Grace Hemenway!

Very soon another woman appeared and exclaimed more mildly over the wanderer's return. And then, at last, the girl cast one glance toward the bearded man who stood motionless by the door.

But the glance was fleeting, uninterested. She turned from it to give a direction to her companion. This woman at once disappeared into a room at the back for a moment, but returned while Martial was still dazed by the stress of his emotions. She went straight to him and thrust a sheaf of bills into his hand.

His fingers involuntarily closed on them.

"There's your reward money," the woman said.

She stared suspiciously at the silent, bearded man, and then opened the door suggestively.

Martial was sufficiently aroused to perceive this opportunity for flight, and he welcomed it. He knew that unless he fled on the instant, he must rush to the girl and gather her in his arms—claim for himself the tenderness she was lavishing on his gift, his namesake, Jack.

So he whirled and fairly bolted out of the house—whereat, the woman sniffed indignantly, and was convinced that her worst suspicions were verified.

Martial, rushing away dazedly, the sheaf of bills still clutched in his hand, was suddenly and rudely halted by an elderly man who seized him firmly by the lapels of his coat, and shouted:

"Police! Police!"

An officer came running, and laid a heavy hand on Martial's shoulder.

"What's the charge?" he demanded.

"Just robbed my house!" the captor explained. "I came in the nick-of time. There's the money in his hand!"

A crowd was springing up by the time Martial was fully awakened to the situation. Then, he received still another shock when he recognized his accuser. It

was Mr. Hemenway, who failed to know his prospective son-in-law in this bearded man fleeing from his house with a handful of money.

But before there was time for Martial to attempt explanations, a diversion occurred. This was caused by the woman who had given Martial the bills, and who had observed the commotion and drawn near.

She was a just woman, though suspicious, and she went now to the young man's aid.

"I gave him the money," she said. "I don't know what else he may have done, but he didn't steal this."

And she explained the circumstances.

The crowd jeered, the policeman grinned, Mr. Hemenway fumed, but apologized reluctantly. As to Martial, he was too much overcome by the various excitements he had undergone to utter a word. Only when he understood that he was free, his eyes fell on a handsome drawn up at the curb, and he sprang in.

"Anywhere!" he said, in answer to the driver's query as to destination.

Presently he stowed the money away in his pocket, and then, with abrupt eagerness, for his brain was clear again, he thrust up the trap in the roof with his cane, and shouted to the cabman:

"To the nearest restaurant—and hurry up!"

It was two days later that a servant brought to Martial a card, with the information that the visitor was in the drawing-room. He took it eagerly, hoping that at last the capitalists' expert had returned. Instead, the card read: "Mr. Julius H. Hemenway."

It was Grace's father.

"Tell him I'll be right down," Martial said weakly.

He had had no idea that Mr. Hemenway knew his whereabouts.

As he went down-stairs, Martial was in a fever of doubt. Why had Mr. Hemenway called on him? Whatever the cause, the visit was most unexpected, even startling.

It was with much trepidation that he advanced to where Mr. Hemenway was sitting, and addressed him.

That gentleman made no answer for a moment to Martial's rather perfunctory,

"Glad to see you, sir," and he ignored the outstretched hand. When he did at last speak, his tone was withering:

"Merely because you got fifty dollars of my money for returning a dog does not make me anxious to know you socially. I don't know what you are doing here, but I am waiting for a friend."

"I forgot for the moment," Martial explained. "It's the whiskers."

"Eh? The whiskers? What do you mean?" Mr. Hemenway demanded tartly.

"Why, I am the dog-man—yes. But, you see, I'm Martial, too. The beard makes a difference."

Mr. Hemenway peered at the young man for a moment in amazement. Then he burst into laughter.

"And even Grace didn't recognize you the other day!" he explained, as he wrung Martial's hand warmly. "Well, get the beard off this afternoon and come up to the house for dinner to-night—seven. You can come a bit earlier, you know."

"You mean—?" the young man questioned eagerly.

"I mean, that the report on your mine came in this morning. It's all right. You see, I happen to be one of the persons interested, back of the men you've been doing business with. It's from them that I learned of your being in the city and where you were stopping. You can marry Grace any time she chooses to set."

Martial would have been perfectly happy but for one thing. He was wondering as to what explanation he should make concerning the reward money.

Naturally, he would be expected to return it to Grace at once. Yet, this was impossible, for the very simple reason that a part of it had already been expended on substantial meals. And then Mr. Hemenway spoke again:

"By the way, John, I wish that you would hang on to that reward for a while. Don't tell Grace just yet that you were the one who got it?"

"Don't tell?"

"No. You see, I want to grumble over the wastefulness of it for a time—she got the extra money from me. In fact, I have grumbled over it. Discipline, you know—sin of extravagance. Let the lesson have time to sink in. It will be to your advantage, too. You see, Jack, if she knew the truth, she'd guy me unmercifully, and there'd be no limit to what she'd spend on the trousseau. Wait until you're on your honeymoon, my boy, before you tell her you were the dog-man. Hang on to the money now, will you?"

"I will," Martial answered earnestly.

"When you tell her, buy her some little keepsake with the fifty dollars," Mr. Hemenway suggested, as he rose to go.

But Martial said to himself:

"I think we'll spend that fifty on a collar for Jack!"

UPSETTING THE GARRISON.

By GARRETT SWIFT.

How the colonel's daughter set an army post by the ears
and the amazing event in which the craze culminated.

WHEN the news reached us that Colonel Melton had been ordered from another detail and was to assume command of the garrison at Prestno, nobody cared. But when, after a short delay, he arrived, everybody stared.

Yet it was not at the colonel himself that we stared. As the chaplain of the regiment, I met him on equal terms, and found him grim, a disciplinarian in every sense of the word, curt of speech,

yet just enough so to warrant my assumption that at last Prestno had a real commander.

It was not at the colonel the people of the garrison town stared. It was at his daughter.

Old in the service as I was, and not so much a chaplain but what life had plenty of joys for me, I must admit that Alice Melton was the most beautiful woman I had ever known.

"Denlin," said Major Peets, "she's going to be the ruin of the fort."

"Or," I said, "its salvation, which I have striven to be in vain."

"There you go!" exclaimed the major with his usual testiness. "Always preaching. Isn't Sunday morning enough for well men, and any other time a man gets a bullet inside his skin? Preaching won't do any good where the colonel's daughter is a counter-attraction."

"Or a counter-irritant," I added, with a grin at his old grizzled face.

What had this veteran of wars to do with a beauty less than twenty?

Or, if it came to that, what had I?

Or, when we get right down to the real problem, what had old Beem, who had been a lieutenant-colonel so long he thought the title was his name? What had the senior captain, or any other?

What had anybody?

Well, as the man who knew more about the matter than any other, excepting, of course, old Mole, who had been surgeon of the regiment till he could tell a man's name by hearing his bones crack, I'll tell you what happened.

When Alice Melton swept into Prestno she captured the place.

Ten four-inch guns mounted upon the parapets, two big disappearing engines of destruction, and seven hundred rifles, might have maintained the place against a good-sized force of the enemy. But they were all powerless before Alice Melton.

She could outride, outshoot, and out-talk any girl I had ever seen, and still remain the most charming.

I almost believe that a thirteen-inch gun, trained at her as she galloped across the plaza on that horrible thing she called a palfry, would burst and kill the gunner rather than hurt that girl. And I am sure that the gunner would prefer to be killed.

I am not going to make any attempt to describe Alice Melton. Understand, I am sixty years of age, and will be retired in a few years with the pay of a retired major of infantry. I have seen majors retired who were younger. And it is not for me, who was never a woman's man, to try to place a word-picture of Alice Melton before the reader.

But I began to think Major Peets knew what he was talking about when he said that she would ruin the garrison.

Peets, the old fool, who would have faced the fires of hell without flinching, knuckled to her smiles so completely that I began to worry about the outcome. But Peets and the grim old Melton were on none too friendly terms, so that eliminated several possibilities I had feared.

Captain Symonds of Company A grew melancholy, and the general impression was that he was in love. And when a man in Prestno fell in love everybody knew with whom it was.

For two or three months, or, perhaps, longer, Fort Prestno was the scene of a succession of idiocies. Captain after captain fell. Then lieutenants began to hover around her skirts like moths around a flame. But none of them had any more encouragement than another.

Old Mole and I grumbled and laughed and almost prayed over what Peets said was the surely arriving dissolution of Prestno.

But I was unprepared for what became the real shock of the whole situation. The shock was worse than the shock of battle.

I think it was Byron who wrote, "Red Battle stamped his hoof and nations felt the shock." Listen.

I was sitting in my comfortable den one afternoon when who should come stalking in but the colonel himself.

"Alone?" he grunted. "And smoking? Well—I'll join you. Give me a stick of fire."

This, in the garrison at Prestno, meant a match. I handed him one.

"By the eternal!" he broke out in a roar, "what the deuce am I going to do? What am I going to do, you old gray-headed sky-pilot? You can guide men away from perdition, they say. Now, tell me what I am going to do?"

I looked at the old grim face in astonishment.

"Have you committed murder?" I asked, keeping myself as calm as possible.

"Murder, no! But I feel like it."

"Sit down, colonel, and calmly tell me what has caused you this troubled mind."

"Mind! Mind! Dammit, don't say mind to me. It's a case of not mind."

I wondered what he meant, but knew there was no use trying to draw him out until he got ready to say what he wished.

He walked up and down my little room, blowing cigar-smoke in clouds and scattering ashes from a furiously smoked and furiously smelling cigar on my best Navajos.

"Denlin," he demanded suddenly, "how long have you been in this infernal garrison?"

"Colonel," I replied with a stifled laugh, "I have been in the fort at Prestno about twenty years."

"How long has Simmet been here?"

"Simmet? Simmet? You mean the first sergeant of Company K?"

"Yes," he bawled.

"Oh, ever since the Spanish War."

"Hang him! Devil take him! What do you know about him?"

"Good-looking young man, who can fight like the mischief, and who has, so far as I know, none of the usual habits supposed, and sometimes wrongly supposed, to be acquired by a soldier in a border town."

"Huh!"

He stood still and looked straight at me.

"For an enlisted man," I went on, "Simmet is all the army wants or demands. As a noncom., he deserves better than the United States of America has given him. But why do you ask? What has he done?"

"Done! What has he done? Nothing."

And he said even this in such an absurdly angry way that I laughed.

"But," he continued, "I have reason to believe that Alice has fallen in love with him."

"Alice! Your daughter!" I exclaimed in wonder. "After having refused captains and lieutenants, not to speak of old Peets and Mole, and almost me, you don't mean to tell me she has fallen in love with a sergeant?"

"I'm not dead sure," he said, dropping at last into an easy chair. "But I think it."

"Why don't you ask?"

"I don't dare. I might know too much."

"It seems incredible," I said, "yet there is no reason why we should grow

unduly excited about the matter. You have not restricted her, so far as I know, in the choice of her associates. The men in Prestno are all moral enough."

"Oh, I couldn't forbid the girl riding with a man like Simmet. He's an infantryman, but he's a good horseman. And a good shot. And a brave man, they tell me."

"All of which usually makes a girl think well of a man."

"And me, too. But I can't consent to her marrying a sergeant."

"Use your influence and have him commissioned."

"Oh—rubbish!"

Well, we sat there and talked it over, and over, and over. Yet at the end of our conversation we had developed nothing any more comforting to the colonel than what I have related.

The colonel, when he left me, was in a surly mood. I was not surprised to learn on the following day that he had so arranged matters that Sergeant Simmet had no time to ride off across the *mesas* with Alice. Or that Alice had no time to ride when Simmet did go.

"Denlin," said Surgeon Mole to me that same day, "Melton's a crusty old cuss. That girl of his is a dashing beauty, and he's too strict with her."

"Too strict?" I repeated. "Why, she has plenty of liberty. But Melton doesn't want a sergeant of infantry for a son-in-law."

"Sergeant of infantry be hanged! He doesn't want anybody. I know. He told me all about it. Some fool idea about not wanting to lose her as a companion. Haw, haw! Simmet isn't the first. There's another."

"Not here?"

"No, not in Prestno. And not a soldier. But when Melton was in Washington there was a young fellow who fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. His name was Marginson. Fine enough fellow, plenty of money, and not obliged to whack around in barracks. But the old curmudgeon wouldn't have it even that way. He even applied for another post to get rid of Marginson."

"Well, well! I am amazed at what you say."

"Are you?" asked Mole, cocking his gray old head to one side. "Well, I'll

tell you something more amazing, perhaps to you, but not to me, who knows more about the soulless parts of a human being. Marginson is in Prestno."

"Then we may look for complications."

"And Melton knows it. He has forbidden Alice to ride with anybody in Prestno, or to go outside the fortification until Marginson has gone."

"And does Simmet know this?"

"I don't know."

There was plenty of room for conjecture in what Mole told me. The days passed, and things began to look like a calm. No clouds seemed to hover over the clear horizon of garrison life. No storm seemed near.

And then there rang from one end of the town to the other the startled tones of men who had sustained a shock.

Jagarosky had been discovered to be a spy of a foreign government then supposed to hold unfriendly sentiments toward our own.

Jagarosky was an itinerant dealer in dress-goods, laces, silk and satin ribbons, and gewgaws that please the eyes and hearts of women, and are difficult to obtain on the border in a garrison town like Prestno. How old Melton had made his discovery was a puzzle to me.

"It's all right," he said. "I suspected the fellow from the first. He was always hanging around my quarters, and two or three times I have seen him talking to Alice."

"Alice knows nothing to tell a spy—that a spy would care to know."

"It isn't what Alice knows. I've got him right, and I've sent on my report to Washington. I'll have him hanged."

"Oh, we don't do that now."

"Well, shot, drawn and quartered, anything you like," said the peppery colonel.

Well, the excitement had not subsided when the word came to have the fellow shot.

I don't know why I was so dense. I am not called a stupid man, as a rule. But when I learned the irony of it all I felt that I had been a fool.

Simmet was to be in command of the firing-squad. It was his duty as well to load the rifles.

The shooting was in the yard back of

the prison of the fort, and was as impressive as ceremony and gloomy pomp could make it.

Jagarosky was blindfolded and stood to wait for the discharge of the rifles, some of which would cause his death.

I stood with Mole.

Now, much as I knew old Mole, and grim as I knew him to be, I had never in all my life seen him so grim, so absolutely devoid of all human feeling, as he was that day.

I, as chaplain, had my duties to perform, and when they were over the squad came marching in with Simmet at their head. The guns were loaded. The file faced the prisoner. Simmet gave the command to fire in a calm voice. The prisoner fell.

In an instant old Mole was at his side.

"Retire!" he thundered to Simmet.

"He is dead."

The sun had set. Drums could be heard in other parts of the fort. Melton, having had his way and put the spy out of the world, was somewhere else.

Everybody in Prestno garrison had something else to do except old Mole and me.

"I don't see where he is hit," I said, making a hurried examination of the man. "And he seems to me to be breathing."

"He is," said this man of science calmly, coldly, and evenly. "He is, and will continue to do so. Melton is an insane man. Don't you know even now who this is?"

"Jagarosky, the spy."

"Jagarosky nobody. Spy nothing. This is Marginson. I told you about him."

"You did," I said in a bewildered way. "But you said he was a young man of independent wealth."

"So he is. But when Melton gave the order that Alice should not leave the fortification, Marginson came here disguised as a pedler."

"Great God! Does Melton know this?"

"I don't know. And neither you nor I will tell him."

"But," I said, "how is it he was not shot? There must have been some good marksmen in that squad, and only one rifle left blank."

"They were all left blank," he replied.

"Come, Mole," I said. "It is dark enough to leave Marginson here to breathe a little. Tell me what all this means."

"It means," said Mole, and for the first time since I had known him his voice was tremulous, "it shows that under the uniform of Sergeant Simmet there beats the heart of a soldier and a man made after God's own image. He knew this was Marginson. He told me. He poured out to me the most manly story of a hopeless love I ever heard or ever want to hear.

"He knew that his own love was hopeless because he was only a sergeant. He knew that Melton would never listen to such a thing as a marriage between him and Alice. Here was his rival, rich, young, able to take better care of her than he was himself. He saw no possibility of promotion. He has no rich nor influential friends. He is a sergeant, and will remain one.

"Here, I say, Denlin, was his rival. Here was his opportunity to get rid of him and take his chances with Alice and her father after Marginson had been forgotten.

"Did he? No. He loved the girl too well. He loved her with a love like that you preach about. He was willing to make the sacrifice. He loaded every rifle in the firing-squad with blanks.

"And now, as a result of the love that Sergeant Simmet bears to the daughter of the colonel, this man still lives to win her. I call it—Denlin, I call it—oh—"

"Order Sergeant Simmet to report here at once," came a cold, hard voice from the rear.

Old Mole had grown so interested that he had raised his own voice. The one that now spoke was that of Melton.

I shivered. I felt cold creeping things up and down my spine. Melton had a reputation that made me almost see—even before another word had been said—the dead bodies of Sergeant Simmet and Marginson lying in the prison yard.

Mole stepped to a door and passed the command along.

"Chaplain," said Melton, turning to me, "you will oblige me by retiring to

my quarters and escorting my daughter here."

Sorrowfully, foreseeing the tragedy the stern old tyrant was about to enact, I obeyed.

I found the girl. I told her my errand.

"Was he hurt?" she asked.

"No," I said. "Then you knew?"

"I knew."

We met before that grim old fighter who had mowed down Indians like wheat when there had been border wars. Before that man who had led his regiment in action through the hell of artillery that almost left him with none to follow.

We stood, Mole and I, two trembling old fellows who had never shown the white feather before, yet unable to speak a word to our superior officer to save one of the three who were now facing him.

Simmet stood cool, brave, waiting for what—for what? Marginson stood cringing, destitute of his disguise, waiting for the command that would now send him to his death.

Alice stood white, but unflinching, before her father.

"I have heard just now," said the old warrior, "a story such as is seldom told in army quarters. I stood, an unwilling listener, to a confidence given a man I trust to another I also trust. I have heard—I have learned. Alice, which of these men do you love?"

"Him," she simply said, placing her hand on the shoulder of Sergeant Simmet.

"Then," roared that awful voice of our commander, "by God, you'll marry him! Denlin, see to this at once. Simmet, I'll see about—I'll see that you get your commission. Marginson, get out of here and never show your face again. And now retire. Denlin, Mole, Alice, Simmet, we'll meet at my quarters. Order a corporal to escort Marginson outside the reservation."

The matter was closed, except that evening I performed a ceremony which made Alice Melton Sergeant Simmet's bride, and two months from that Simmet was ordered to more active service with a commission.

And Mole—old grizzled Mole and I—are still at Prestno.

A MATTER OF COATS.

By CHARLES B. FREMONT.

The struggle for a prize, the thunder-clap that nipped hopes, and a long-delayed aftermath of explanation.

"AND if I win the prize, you'll marry me — eh, Lillian?" exclaimed Dunston dejectedly.

"I won't give you a positive promise to marry you, even in that event," replied the girl with a tantalizing little laugh. "But if you succeed in coming out at the head of your class, I certainly shall regard your proposal with more favor than I do at present. You see, you'll have accomplished something really great, then, Tom. I couldn't marry a man unless he'd done something really worth while, you know."

"Well, I guess I've already done one or two things worth while—on the football field. Don't they count for anything in your eyes, Lillian?"

The girl shook her head.

"Football is only a game," she replied. "I'm not one of those foolish, light-headed girls who admire a man for his brawn and muscle. If I were that sort of a girl, I should in all probability seek to marry a blacksmith or a coal-heaver. It isn't to your credit that Nature presented you with a pair of massive shoulders. If you want to do something creditable, win that prize."

"Can't you make it a little easier?" pleaded Dunston. "You know I don't stand a ghost of a show of coming out at the top of my class, Lillian. The examinations are only three weeks off, and I'm so wretchedly unprepared that I'll be doing well if I pass at all. Why not make some other conditions?"

But the girl shook her flaxen head very resolutely.

"You must win that prize—if you want me even to think of marrying you, Tom," she said.

"If that girl is really serious, I stand about as much chance of winning her as you do of marrying the Empress of China," bitterly declared Dunston to his friend Lou Palmer, half an hour later.

They sat in the latter's room in Dormitory A, Dunston a picture of gloom and despair, and Palmer's cheerful countenance distended by a grin that was meant to be sympathetic.

"Yes," he replied with brutal candor, which was characteristic, "I'm afraid you're right, old man. I understand the examinations are going to be stiffer than ever this year. I overheard President Howells saying so the other day. He said that nobody who hasn't a thorough knowledge of all the subjects will be able to squeeze through."

Dunston groaned.

"That settles my hash," he growled. "I've been cutting lectures frightfully this term. I wish now that I'd devoted more of my time to studies."

"Well, you've still got three weeks left. Perhaps you can make up lost time by 'cramming.'"

Dunston shook his head hopelessly.

"A fellow can't do a whole term's work in three weeks and come out at the top of his class, no matter how hard he crams," he declared. "If I only had some idea of the kind of questions they were going to ask, it would be different."

Palmer smiled.

"I'd give a great deal to know that myself," he said.

"You!" exclaimed Dunston in surprise. "Surely, it doesn't make very much difference to you how you fare in the examinations, Lou. You haven't much to gain or lose, have you?"

"Haven't I? It may interest you to learn that I received a letter from my stern *pater* by this morning's mail, containing the cheerful information that the old man has made up his mind that I'm wasting my time in college, and concluding with the ultimatum that if I fail to pass the exams this term I'll have to leave college and go to work on the farm."

"Phew!" exclaimed Dunston. "That sounds bad. Still, you've got a better chance than I have, old man. You're only required to pass, while to make good I must capture the first prize."

"Well, perhaps if you fail to win the prize, the girl will waive the point and marry you, anyway. Women don't mean what they say half the time, you know."

Dunston shook his head.

"You don't know Lillian," he said with a sigh. "When she says a thing she means it. I discovered that fact long ago. I feel confoundedly sure that it's a case of—no prize, no girl."

"Well, let's do our best, anyway," cried Palmer with sudden determination. "We'll make the most of the three weeks that are left—eh, Tom? We'll burn the midnight oil. We'll cram as we've never crammed before. We'll work together—eh, old man?"

"Sure!" replied Dunston, somewhat carried away by his friend's enthusiasm. "We'll make a try for it; but I'm afraid it isn't going to do much good, as far as I am concerned. I'm so wretchedly unprepared."

If Miss Lillian Howard could have caught a glimpse of Tom Dunston as he sat in Palmer's rooms at night, poring over his books, his face pale and his brow corrugated by mental concentration, the chances are that she would have relented and lessened the severity of the task she had imposed upon him.

The two chums began to work as they had never worked before. They attended every lecture, became constant visitors to the college reference library, and slept but little, deeming the nocturnal hours too valuable to be wasted in slumber.

As a result, they managed to cover a great deal of the ground they had lost in the forepart of the term, and when the day of the examination dawned Palmer expressed himself as being supremely confident that he would get through all right, and thereby avoid the painful necessity of going to work on the farm, while Dunston began to hope that perhaps, after all, he might stand a chance of winning that prize.

The night before examination the two men went without any sleep at all. They needed those last few precious hours for going over doubtful ground.

When morning dawned, they looked at each other out of bleary eyes and grinned.

"Gee whizz, old man!" exclaimed Dunston. "You certainly are a holy show. You look about as fresh as the winner of a six-day bicycle race. Your own mother wouldn't know you."

"Well, you're not exactly spry looking, either," chuckled Palmer. "This hard grind has told on you, old fellow. You're a wreck! Well, never mind. It's over now, and we've the satisfaction of knowing that we've done splendid work. Perhaps we may not succeed; but, at any rate, we deserve success."

"Heigho!" sighed Dunston. "I'd give a great deal for a good long sleep, Lou. We haven't had a decent rest in three weeks, and I'm horribly tired. I'm half inclined to believe that we may have overdone it. I'm afraid I shall fall asleep in the examination-room."

"No, you won't," responded his friend cheerfully. "I've got a tonic that will fix you up in fine shape. It's better than sleep."

"Where is it?" cried Dunston glancing wistfully toward the sideboard.

"No, it isn't in there," said Palmer, interpreting the other's glance. "We'll leave that stuff alone, old man. The tonic I referred to was the river. An hour before the examinations start we'll indulge in a good swim. The water is deliciously cold, and it will refresh us as no other tonic could do."

"That sounds pretty good to me," declared Dunston. "I guess a good swim would just about put me in shape."

An hour afterward the chums went down to the riverside, and, leaving their clothes in the boat-house, plunged into the ice-cold water.

Both men were powerful swimmers, and they struck out energetically, swimming side by side and taking long strokes which sent their sturdy bodies darting through the water.

"Isn't this great?" cried Palmer, lifting his head and grinning at his friend. "Isn't this more refreshing than sleep, Tom?"

The other seemed about to reply, but instead he suddenly gave vent to a scream of agony, and his arms shot upward.

Before Palmer could get to him he had gone down, uttering a wild, despairing cry as his head disappeared beneath the surface.

The frightened Palmer guessed at once what had happened. His chum had been seized with a cramp.

It seemed hours instead of minutes before the unfortunate man rose to the surface again. Palmer did not lose his opportunity. He grabbed the drowning one by the hair, thanking his lucky stars that his chum was a football player, and therefore wore his locks long.

Still keeping a tight clutch on Dunston's tawny thatch, the rescuer made for the shore as fast as he could swim.

Dunston appeared to be all right by the time they landed. He was inclined to regard the matter as more or less of a joke, although he was serious enough when he thanked Palmer for having saved his life.

"That puts me in your debt, old fellow," he said, a trifle huskily. "If it hadn't been for your timely assistance, I should be lying at the bottom of the river now."

"Aw—forget it," replied Palmer gruffly. "Hurry up and get into your things, Tom. Want me to give you a hand?"

"Of course not. I'm all right now. There's nothing the matter with me."

"All right. Then, hurry up and get dressed. We haven't any time to lose. We don't want to get to the examination late, you know."

As they walked back to the college, Palmer remarked anxiously: "I hope your little misadventure won't affect your work to-day, Tom. You're sure you feel all right, eh?"

"Oh, sure. I feel fit as a fiddle," replied Dunston; "I feel as if I could tackle any kind of examination paper. I tell you, old man, I'm going to win that prize. I can just feel it in my bones."

When they reached the examination-room they parted company. Each man had a desk allotted to him, Palmer's in the front and Dunston's at the rear.

The examiners went from desk to desk, leaving a printed sheet of questions with each man.

Dunston eagerly took up the paper

and hopefully started to investigate its contents.

As he proceeded, his face grew blanker and blanker, and he frowned with vexation and despair.

The very first question was a poser. The second, third, and fourth he couldn't have answered to save his life. All hope of winning the class prize—and Lillian—vanished right there.

Why, he couldn't answer even enough questions to pass the examination. He was bound to flunk.

His gaze abstractedly wandered over the room and lighted on the profile of Lou Palmer. He noted that his chum also appeared to be in distress. There was a look on Palmer's face as if he could already see himself going through the uncongenial labor of mowing hay on his father's farm.

"Poor Lou!" mused Dunston. "He seems to be up against it as badly as I am. Apparently, we studied everything except the things they have seen fit to question us about. It's a darned shame that we've had all this grind for nothing."

Quite absent-mindedly, he plunged his right hand into the side pocket of his coat, and his fingers closed upon an unfamiliar object. It felt like a square piece of cardboard.

With the idle curiosity which will often possess a man at critical moments, Dunston began to rack his brain to account for the presence of that piece of cardboard in his pocket.

He could not recall having placed it there. He could not imagine what it could be. To solve the problem, he finally drew it from his pocket and gazed at it in astonishment.

It was a piece of white cardboard, about two inches square, and both sides of it were covered with handwriting. The writing was very small, and Dunston held it closer to his eyes in order to decipher it.

In doing so he was, of course, quite unconscious of the fact that he was being intently watched by Professor Martin, one of the examiners who stood on the opposite side of the room, gazing at Dunston in surprise.

Before the latter could read a word of the fine handwriting, Professor Mar-

tin darted over to him with the stealthy tread of a cat after a mouse. His long wiry fingers closed around the strong wrist of Dunston's right hand with a grip of steel.

"Let me see what you have there, young man," he hissed.

The undergraduate looked up at him angrily.

"You don't think for a minute that I—" he began thickly.

But he did not finish the sentence. The professor was holding the cardboard close to his eyes and reading the handwriting upon it.

"Leave your seat and come with me at once," he commanded sternly.

"What for?" protested Dunston.

"You don't mean—" "For your own sake, I should advise you to come quietly and avoid a scene," the professor whispered.

The hot blood had rushed to Dunston's cheeks. It now receded, leaving his face deathly white.

He shrugged his shoulders disdainfully, and with a scornful smile upon his lips, arose quietly and followed the examiner up the center aisle and out of the room.

"I suppose you've brought me out here to accuse me of cheating," he said, after the door had closed behind them.

The professor nodded grimly. He was a tall, thin, hatchet-faced man, with cold steel-gray eyes.

"I suppose you won't believe me if I give you my word of honor that I haven't read a word of what's written on that cardboard," continued Dunston.

"You will have opportunity to defend yourself later on," was the cold response. "At present nothing you can say will be of any avail. You must come with me."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To President Howells."

Dunston again shrugged his shoulders with a well-feigned air of indifference.

"Mr. Dunston, I am shocked—inexpressibly shocked," declared the gentle-voiced college president a few minutes later, as Dunston and his accuser stood before him. "You are the last man in this college I would have deemed capable of a dishonorable act. Cheating in an examination is a reprehensible offense—"

"Believe me, sir, I had no intention of cheating. It is an outrage to accuse me of such an offense," cried Dunston earnestly.

"Pardon me, Dr. Howells. This appears to be more than a simple case of cheating in the examination-room," broke in the rasping voice of Professor Martin. "There appears to be a far more serious matter involved. If you will examine that piece of cardboard, which I took from the hand of this young man, you will find that it contains the answers to all the questions of the first examination paper, written in consecutive order."

"Dear me!" cried the horrified college president, "do you mean to say, professor, that this young man went to the examination-room with an advance knowledge of the questions to be asked?"

"It looks very much like it," replied Professor Martin. "How else could he have written those answers on that piece of cardboard? Despite the strict precautions that were taken to prevent anybody from gaining access to those papers before the examinations, it seems there has been a leak somewhere. Perhaps this young man will make partial atonement for what he has done by explaining how he came into possession of the information."

Dunston was looking at the speaker in horrified amazement.

"Do you mean to say that that card contains the answers to the examination paper?" he gasped. "I swear that I did not know that. On my word of honor, I had never seen that piece of cardboard until I drew it out of my pocket in the examination-room."

"Then, perhaps, you will be good enough to explain how it happened to get into your pocket?" sneered the professor, regarding Dunston with a look of profound contempt.

"Yes," said President Howells, looking almost imploringly at the accused undergraduate. "That is a very reasonable demand. You must explain that, young man, if you wish us to believe such an extraordinary statement."

Dunston was about to reply that he was quite unable to throw any light upon this mystery, when, happening to slip his left hand aimlessly into the side pocket

of his coat, his fingers closed upon a bulldog pipe.

It was not his pipe. Dunston did not use tobacco. How, then, had it found its way into his pocket?

Here was another mystery. Could it be possible that— A ray of enlightenment suddenly shot through his brain. He raised his right arm and closely scrutinized the sleeve of the coat he was wearing.

It was not his coat.

It was a coat so like his own in color, texture, and cut, that until now he had not noticed the substitution. But he knew that his coat had a small acid burn on the cuff of his right sleeve, and this mark was missing.

He was wearing another man's coat. The cardboard he had taken from his pocket was the property of some other man.

The grave offense with which he was charged was an offense for which some other man—the real owner of the coat—should suffer.

He was about to proclaim this fact. He was about to announce joyfully the discovery he had made, when another sudden thought froze the words upon his lips.

He remembered now that his chum, Lou Palmer, was wearing a suit almost exactly like his own. They had bought them at the same time, from the same tailor. Even by his sense of touch, he could tell that the pipe in the pocket was Lou Palmer's pipe.

Undoubtedly he was wearing his chum's coat. In dressing hastily at the boat-house after their swim in the river, they had got their clothing mixed up.

And if this was Lou Palmer's coat, it meant that his chum had gone to the examination-room with the deliberate intention of cheating his way through. It meant that Palmer had in some way managed to get an advance glimpse at the examination papers, and had intended to make use of his surreptitiously obtained information.

The sudden realization of this appalling fact staggered Dunston. He had always believed his chum to be the very soul of honor.

He was brought to his senses by the voice of Dr. Howells.

"Well, sir," said the college president sternly, "we are patiently waiting to hear your explanation."

Dunston realized that there was only one thing for him to do. He recollected that Palmer had saved his life that morning. It was a case of one good turn deserving another.

He squared his shoulders and looked the college president straight in the eyes.

"I am sorry to say, sir, that I have no explanation to offer," he said in a firm tone.

"You refuse to defend yourself against this very grave charge?" cried Dr. Howells, in surprise.

Dunston nodded grimly.

"Very well, sir. Under the circumstances, there is only one thing for me to do. You were caught, red-handed, cheating at a college examination, and doubtless you know the penalty. You are hereby expelled from this institution."

Dunston bowed. His face was very white.

Professor Martin whispered something in the president's ear, and the latter nodded his head.

"If you will make a full confession as to how you managed to gain access to the examination papers, we may be disposed to deal leniently with you," he said to Dunston.

The young man shook his head.

"I have absolutely nothing to say," he replied.

The next day his expulsion was officially announced. It created a great sensation; for Dunston was one of the most popular members of the student body.

There were some who looked upon cheating at an examination as such a despicable offense that they announced their intention of henceforth cutting Dunston dead whenever they met him. Others, however, expressed sympathy for the unfortunate student, and even discussed the possibility of petitioning the faculty to commute his punishment.

Lou Palmer, however, did not attach himself to this latter group. He was stern in his denunciation of Dunston, and when the two men met face to face on the campus he turned fiercely upon his former chum.

"I didn't think you'd be capable of such a dirty, contemptible, low-down trick as that, Dunston," he said bitterly. "I always had an idea you were a gentleman, and I'd have staked my last dollar upon your sense of honor. If I'd have known that you were going to do anything like that, I'll be hanged if I wouldn't have thought twice before I saved your life in the river yesterday."

Dunston listened to this speech in amazement. The cool nerve of his erstwhile chum completely staggered him.

He relieved his feelings by a contemptuous smile and, without uttering a single word, turned on his heel.

"By the way," called Palmer, after him, "I've got a coat of yours up in my room. We got our things mixed in dressing, after our swim yesterday. Please call or send for it, and bring me back my own coat."

An hour later Dunston, walking up Broad Street, met Lillian Howard, who was out shopping. He advanced toward her eagerly, his hat in his hand; but she passed him by as if they had never met, a look of cold disdain upon her pretty face.

After that, Dunston left the college town and went to New York. His cup of bitterness was filled to overflowing. A week later he sailed for the diamond-mines of South Africa.

Ten years afterward two men met one afternoon on the top of a London omnibus, bound for the Strand.

One man was tall and broad-shouldered, and his bronzed face was a guarantee of honesty. The other was short of stature, slightly built, and his eyes were shifty.

Both men were prosperous looking; but, while the taller was dressed in perfect taste, the other was flashily attired to the extent of vulgarity.

The latter was the first to speak.

"Pardon me," he said, leaning over in his seat, "isn't your name Dunston? You're Jack Dunston, who was expelled from college ten years ago, are you not?"

The other man nodded.

"I admit the correctness of the identification," he said quietly. "And if I am not mistaken, your name is Stanley. You were a member of my class, and I

never liked you—you were always such a wretched little cad."

The smaller man acknowledged this compliment by a good-natured grin.

"It's strange that we should meet like this, isn't it?" he went on. "I've often wondered what had become of you, old man. You seem to have got along all right since you left college."

"Oh, yes," the other answered coldly. "I haven't any reason to complain, I guess."

"I'm pretty well fixed myself," announced Stanley with a self-satisfied smirk. "These are real diamonds I'm sporting, I want you to understand. I'm in the race-track business and making barrels of money."

"Humph!" grunted the other, not at all interested, and, as a gentle hint to his flashily dressed companion that he had no desire for further conversation with him he opened his evening paper and began to read.

Undismayed by this slight, the little man spoke again.

"Do you know," he drawled, "I've always felt sorry for you, old fellow. It was all a mistake that you were expelled from college. It was that fellow Palmer who should have been expelled."

Dunston looked up from his paper and frowned.

"Really, my friend, I don't care to discuss the matter," he said stiffly.

"I know you never liked me," went on the other persistently, "but I never bore you any ill-will. It was that fellow Palmer I detested. I hated that chap like poison. It was he I was trying to fix—not you."

Dunston suddenly threw down his newspaper and turned upon the other man excitedly.

"Eh? What's that?" he cried.

"I suppose there isn't any danger in confessing everything now," said the other with a grin. "It's ten years since it happened, and we're out of college now. Besides, I've always felt that I owe you an apology and an explanation."

"What are you driving at?" growled Dunston. "Hurry up and say it, or I'll throw you off this omnibus."

"No violence, now," Stanley rejoined, a little fearfully. "I'm no match for you in strength, and I won't tell you a

single word unless you promise to keep your hands off me. You can't make me talk if I don't want to, you know."

Somewhat grudgingly, Dunston promised.

"It was I who put that piece of cardboard in your pocket," said Stanley calmly. "I didn't mean to put it in *your* pocket. I meant to put it in Palmer's. You remember the pair of you went to take a swim, the morning of the examinations. I followed you to the boat-house, and when you were in the water I slipped that card in the coat I thought was Palmer's."

With a growl, Dunston half rose from his seat. His fists were clenched and his eyes were threatening. But he remembered his promise, and with an effort sat down again.

"Go on," he said sternly.

"I thought that when Palmer got to the examination-room he'd discover the piece of cardboard in his pocket, and when he found that it contained the answers to the examination paper, he'd be tempted to use the information. I intended to watch him closely, and as soon as I saw him referring to that card I was going to call the attention of one of the examiners to him, and thus have him caught red-handed in the act of cheating."

Again Dunston half rose from his seat, his fists clenched and his manner threatening.

"Remember your promise," cried the other man, just in the nick of time, and Dunston sat down again.

"And how did you get access to those examination papers in advance, you treacherous little cur?" he growled.

"That was easy," replied Stanley

with a self-satisfied smile. "The man who printed the papers kept them in a safe until the day of the examination. But he had a good-for-nothing son, who managed to learn the combination of that safe; and that son happened to be in my power. I forced him to get me a copy of the papers two weeks before the exams."

"It was easy for me to go to the examination-room fully prepared to answer every question—thanks to a little piece of cardboard I had in my own pocket—an exact duplicate of the one which caused your expulsion. As a result, I was lucky enough to capture the first prize that year. I know you'll be pleased to hear that, old man."

Again Dunston sprang up threateningly.

"You dirty little cad!" he growled, "I'll thrash you—"

"No, you won't," said the other calmly. "You promised not to lay a hand on me, and you were always a man of your word, Dunston. Besides, you really ought to be grateful to me for telling you all this. Remember, I'm making a purely voluntary confession simply because I've always felt that I owed you an apology. That mistake of mine hit you pretty hard, didn't it, old man? If I remember rightly, you lost your girl, Lillian Howard, as a result of it, didn't you?"

"Not exactly," replied Dunston. "If it wasn't for the fact that I married Miss Lillian Howard five years ago, and therefore didn't greatly suffer by the mischief you worked, I'd be strongly tempted to break a promise now and give you the soundest thrashing you ever had in your life."

Between Syracuse and Buffalo.

By EDWARD PRESTON CAMPBELL.

A bachelor to the rescue in a honeymoon tiff and what his interference cost him.

FOR the benefit of several of my friends, and the public in general, it is up to me to explain *why* I rode in the smoker with a lot of Italians, instead

of in the parlor-car, where I had established myself when the train left New York. For several reasons, I was glad to make the change.

I felt great when the "Limited" pulled out for Chicago. Dame Fortune had been real good to me, and from the looks of things, she intended I should have still more of her worldly goods. There was a contract waiting to be signed, after which my bank account would go up several more notches.

There was no one in the car who interested me in the least, so I lay back, and dreamed about the future.

I was aroused, however, when the train pulled into Syracuse, for the platform of the station was crowded with people, all cheering to beat the band.

I realized what it was all about when I made a quick dodge to escape an old shoe. That is the drawback to traveling in the summer-time—you never know what is coming through the window. Of course, after that I kept my eyes open for the blushing bride.

She was as nice as she could be. Dainty, petite, charming, and all that sort of thing. I was willing to take my oath that she was never intended to be the wife of that which came behind her.

I tell you what, some men are lucky in this world.

Several times I noticed Mr. Husband letting his eye roam around the car. I knew that would be bad enough after about three years of married life; but to do it on one's honeymoon! That seemed the limit.

A most charming young lady boarded the train at Rochester. She was all alone, and her presence made every one sit up and take notice. I'll admit that I, for one, was willing to leave home and mother right on the spot for her.

Mr. Husband took a "look," and his wife caught him; then the fun began.

I could not hear all that was said, but I managed to get a line on what she was handing him. I caught: "You don't love me any more;" then she resorted to tears.

That made Mr. Husband mad, and he lost his head completely. He sprang to his feet. "When I return," I heard him say, "I trust you will be in better humor."

With that he went out on the observation platform, and gazed at the scenery.

For a few moments the bride pouted; then, drying her eyes, she called for the

porter. (No one was on to the fact that there was any trouble between the bridal couple—except yours truly.)

"Porter," she said sweetly, "I would like a pot of tea served for two at once."

When the tea came I noticed that she became rather nervous; something told me she was going to do a desperate deed.

You can imagine my state of mind, then, when I saw her take from the folds of her dress a small vial, and then look furtively around to note if any one was watching. I held my newspaper in front of me, but peered around the edge of it.

Carefully she poured the contents of the vial into her cup. Then, with a mighty effort, I pulled myself together. I made up my mind that I would prevent her taking that dose of poison if I had to use force.

She seemed undecided; then, as though her mind was suddenly made up, she lifted the cup to her lips. I made a quick jump, just in time to knock the tea to the floor.

It is needless to say that the car was instantly in an uproar. Hot tea over one's clothes was never conducive to geniality. The passengers didn't know what it was all about, and I wasn't telling.

Of course, the young lady had to faint. With the assistance of the conductor, we carried her into a stateroom, where we laid her on a sofa. Then came the mad scramble for a doctor. Luckily, there proved to be one on the train.

He applied smelling-salts, and the bride soon regained consciousness.

"Why did he do it—why did he do it? Everything would have been ended," she moaned.

"There, there, now," cajoled the doctor, "we will have things all right. You had better see if you can find the husband," turning to me. "I will take care of the young lady."

Somehow, the people had got on to the fact that I had done something. Honest, I felt as if I had grown about three inches.

When I reached the observation platform, there was Mr. Husband smoking his cigar as though nothing had happened. How to approach him was the next question. I wanted to tell him

what had occurred and at the same time assure him that everything was all right.

"I beg your pardon, sir," I began, "my name is John Morris. I trust—"

Then words seemed to fail me.

"Well, young man," he broke in, "my name is Charles Philimore; what can I do for you?"

He was looking me square in the eye, in rather a cold, heartless fashion.

"It is this way," I continued. "When you got on at Syracuse I realized that you had just been married, and as I had contemplated taking a similar trip in the near future, I thought I would make a few close observations. Pardon me, if I say that you did not play your part very well—your wife caught you in the act of looking at that fair damsel who got on at Rochester—"

At this point he interrupted me with: "What the deuce are you driving at?"

"Simply this: after you left Mrs. Philimore, she ordered some tea. I saw that she had become rather nervous, but imagine my horror when I saw her pour into it a whitish powder from a vial that she had taken from the folds of her dress. Knowing that she was going to do something rash, I knocked the cup from her lips. And—"

"You take all this time to tell me that my wife has been at death's door," he broke in, and tore into the car, brushing past me roughly.

After straightening out my necktie and adjusting my clothes, I reentered the car myself.

As I passed the stateroom I saw the bride with her arms around "hubby's" neck.

"No, dear," I heard her say, "that was not poison; it was only some harmless powder that I bought from a fortune-teller, to be used when danger threatened. She told me that a young girl with dark black eyes would cross my path, so I thought the time had arrived when I saw you look at the young lady that got on at Rochester.

"When you went out on the platform I ordered tea for two. I could not resist the temptation to taste the one with the powder in. No sooner had I put the cup to my lips than the man across the aisle knocked it to the floor."

So that was the answer. Lord deliver me from any woman that listens to any such kind of fortune-teller.

I lingered for a second longer in the passageway. I was rather anxious to hear what "hubby" had to say, when the exact truth percolated through his brain.

"My dear," he replied in a tone which did not appeal to me, "excuse me a minute. There is a man on this train that gets off *here*."

Now, as I said, I was on my way to Chicago. I had a faint idea of what his intentions were, so I quietly "pulled my freight," and made for the smoking-car.

This explains why I preferred to ride with the élite of the pick-and-shovel fraternity, and also why I am still a bachelor.

THE FLOWERS OF JUNE.

AGAINST the trellised walls the roses lean,

The gloria her cheeks of amber turns

To greet the sun, whose crimson fervor burns

In Henrietta's blush, behind the green

Of fluttering leaf; the clinging branches screen

The snow-white buds; the ravished eye discerns

Where sweet La Marque's long, pointed leaves, like ferns

In drooping festoons swing. But, ah! Between

The breeze-swayed vines and perfume-breathing flowers

I catch a glimpse of one fair, golden head

To me more dear than rose-encircled bowers—

A maid more bright than those by garlands led

In Flora's train. I haste, with eager feet,

And press the blooms aside, my love to greet.

Harry L. Wells.

Build Your Own Boat Brooks Build Your Own Furniture BY THE System



I CAN sell you a boat for one-fourth of what a factory would charge. I can sell you furniture for one-third of what a dealer would charge.

I will sell you 100 cents' worth of actual value and results for 25 or 35 cents. Is it worth considering?

I cannot tell you my whole story here, but if you will send for my catalogues, they will prove what I claim. Give me a chance—right now, today. Read my guarantee—it means you take no risk.

MY GUARANTEE

Whether you buy boats or furniture of me, I absolutely guarantee that you will be satisfied. I will instantly refund your money if you are not. I stand back of every statement made in this advertisement. I have made them as strong and convincing as I know how. The goods warrant it. C. C. BROOKS

You Can Save Two-Thirds to Three-Fourths

I have revolutionized the boat-building business. I have spent the last twenty-two years in building or sailing boats, and am a practical boat man.

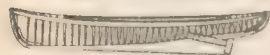
Seven years ago I originated the Pattern System of boat building. Today my customers are found in every civilized country on earth.

Over 50,000 boats (more than the combined output of all boat factories) have been built from my system, mostly by inexperienced men and boys.

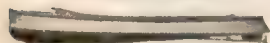
Over half of these have built several boats—a large number have established themselves in the boat-building business.



Boat Patterns \$1.50 and up.



A Set-Up Frame



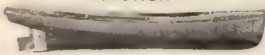
A Semi-Speed Model

good a boat as the professional boat-builder.

My boat catalogue shows all kinds of boats and tells how anyone can build a boat from them.

Anyone can build a boat by using my exact size printed paper patterns and illustrated instruction sheets, telling how to do every little detail. You cannot fail to build as

LAUNCH



ROW BOAT



Knock-Down Boat Frames.

Many people prefer to buy my knock-down frames (all ready to put together) for their boats, instead of working up the rough lumber.

Owing to my immense factory facilities, I can in many cases supply knock-down frames at a lower price than you would pay for suitable raw material.

All parts of my knock-down frames

I have been selling this furniture for three years. Every customer is enthusiastic about it.

All pieces are solid oak and are machined, smoothed, fitted, all ready so any one can put them together. You can make a beautiful Mission or Arts and Crafts chair, davenport, table or bookshelf in a few minutes. Apply the stain (only one coat—no rubbing) and you have a solid and handsome piece of furniture. Every piece and every result is guaranteed to be satisfactory in every way or money refunded.



Height 38 in.
Depth 27 in.
Width 29 in.



As she received it

You save (1) in the factory cost, (2) in the factory profit, (3) all dealers' profits, (4) two-thirds of freight, (5) finishing expense, (6) the expense of crating and packing—making a saving of two-thirds or three-fourths, according to the piece.

\$4 buys this chair (shown in cut) without cushion. Better same style **\$7.00.**

By the Brooks System you can own \$14.00 chairs for \$4.00; \$25.00 davenports for \$7.00; \$12.00 porch swings for \$4.00; \$25.00 tables for \$8.00, etc.

\$6.00 Buys this Morris Chair



Width 33 in.
Height 46 1/2 in.

My catalogue explains everything Mailed free. It shows why no skill is required, why you take no risk. Beautify your home for very little money.

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Type 1

Here is an engine I know is all right. The "Brooks Special" has copper water jacket, complete marine and electrical equipment, ready to install—3 h. p. Weighs 53 lbs. Will supply this engine together with special 15 1/2 foot K. D. launch frame built especially for it for **\$70.00.** Don't buy before you investigate this. Send for my engine catalogue—it's free. Save money by getting our special combination prices on all sizes of engines and frames when purchased together.

Write me personally for my boat, engine or furniture catalogue. Sent free.

C. C. BROOKS, President.

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(Originators of the Pattern System of Boat Building)

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BROOKS MFG. CO.
(Originators of the Knock-Down System of Home Furnishing)

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FOR MEN AND WOMEN

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In Regal Oxfords there is no gaping at the ankle or slipping at the heel. And this perfect fit is just one reason why the shape of Regal Oxfords

is preserved until they are ready to be thrown away.

Here is one of the new Regal Brown models—the "Latham." The moderately full toe, blucher top, extension sole and Military heel are style-characteristics of this season.

Regal quality has long been standard throughout America and 20 foreign countries. Comfort and perfect fit are assured by Regal quarter-sizes.

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If you don't live near one of the 360 Regal stores and agencies, order from the Regal Mail Order Department. If the shoes are not exactly as ordered, we will cheerfully exchange, or will refund your money if desired.

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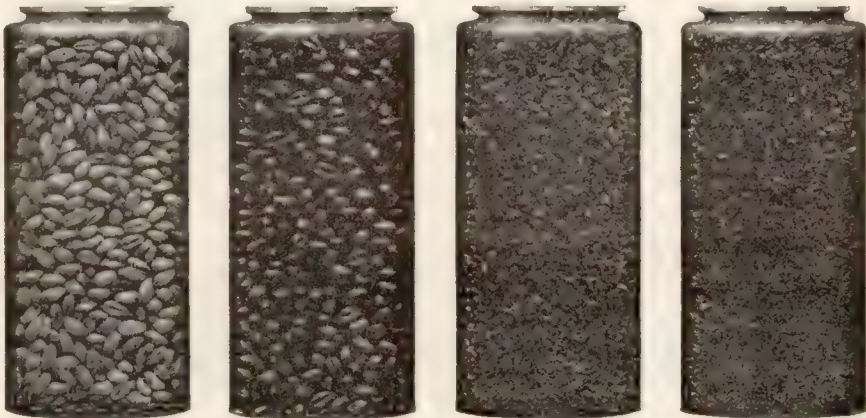
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Mail Order Sub-Stations: Whitman, Mass. Box 905. San Francisco, Cal., 791 Market St.—*New Store*. London, Eng., 97 Cheapside, cor. Lawrence Lane, E. C.

POSTUM—

What It Is

Made of—



No. 1.

No. 2.

No. 3.

No. 4.

Clean Whole Wheat (No. 1) is separated into kernel and outer or bran-coat; the first containing carbohydrates and proteids (tissue-material and energy-storing elements); the second, phosphate of potash for rebuilding brain and nerve cells. The kernel is

Skillfully Roasted (No. 2) to a degree that develops in wheat an aroma similar to Java coffee (but without the use of coffee or any drug-like substance); hence the delicious flavour, when Postum is served hot with cream, which has led many to think they were drinking coffee. The roasted kernels are then

Cooled and Ground (No. 3) and set aside. The roasting has changed part of the starch into dextrin and dextrose, or grape-sugar, which form soluble carbohydrates, or energy-making material, and the proteids (tissue-forming elements) are also made soluble for prompt absorption. Next

The Bran-Coat (No. 4) is mixed with molasses, roasted and ground separately, then blended with the other part of the wheat to form the perfected product—Postum.

The relief from coffee ails when Postum is used instead, is a matter of history. Try it for your own self-proof.

“There’s a Reason.”

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AND ALL YOUR

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This magnificent gondola Turkish Couch \$9.95. The greatest couch value in the world. It is 78 inches long and 30 inches wide. Has 8 rows of deep biscuit tufts and is built on our famous steel construction of oil tempered springs. Filling is of fine tow with cotton felt top. The beautiful massive frame is built of highly figured, polished quarter-sawn oak, handsomely carved and fitted with heavy claw feet. Covering is of highest quality French Velour in figured effect and comes in red, green or brown colors. Send \$1.50 today and we will ship you this couch on approval. **Catalog 10** shows thirty-four styles of couches at prices from \$4.75 to \$37.50.

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Home-baked Beans or Van Camp's?

On one side the beans are mushy and broken, because you have baked in dry heat.

The other beans are baked in live steam. They are all baked alike—baked until they are mealy. Yet they are nutty because they are whole.

On one side the beans are heavy and hard to digest, for you lack sufficient heat. They ferment and form gas.

Van Camp's are baked at 245 degrees. That fierce heat separates the particles so the digestive juices can get to them.

Then we bake the beans, the tomato

sauce and the pork all together, and get our delicious blend.

On one side is the bother of soaking, boiling and baking. The other beans are all ready. Heat the can in hot water, then open. The dish is as fresh and savory as when it was freshly baked.

Let your people decide which they want.

Serve both your beans and Van Camp's, and see which they ask for next. And be glad of their choice. For 'twill save you the bother of baking beans, and let our chef cook for you.

Van Camp's pork and beans baked with tomato sauce

You don't know how good beans can be until you once try Van Camp's.

We pay \$2.10 per bushel to get the choicest Michigan beans. We could buy beans for 30 cents. But ours are picked out by hand to give us only the whitest, the plumpest, the very cream of the crop.

We could buy tomato sauce ready-made for exactly one-fifth what we spend to make ours. But it would lack the richness, the

sparkling zest, which we get from vine-ripened tomatoes.

We believe that the best beans, baked with the best sauce, are cheap enough. And millions of people agree with us.

For beans are Nature's choicest food, when they are rightly cooked. They are like meat in their food value, and not like it in cost. Try serving such beans as your people want often, and see what you save on meat.

Prices: 10, 15 and 20 cents per can.

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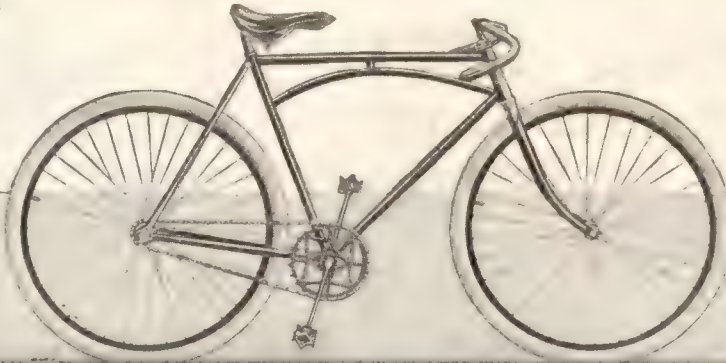
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We are now spending thousands of dollars advertising this wonderful new machine in the leading magazines, thus giving it a national introduction. The demand is enormous.



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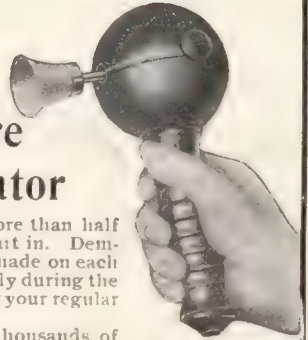
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A HOWARD watch is always worth what you pay for it. The price of each watch from the 17-jewel, in a fine gold-filled case (guaranteed for 25 years) at \$35; to the 23-jewel, in a 14K solid gold case at \$150—is fixed at the factory and a printed ticket attached.

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Pioneer Perfect Frames are the Standard



of knock-down boat construction. You can easily build this boat yourself with Pioneer Perfect Frames, the **only** frames having ribs bent to exact shape, set up, trued, tested and beveled for planking before being knocked down for shipment to you.

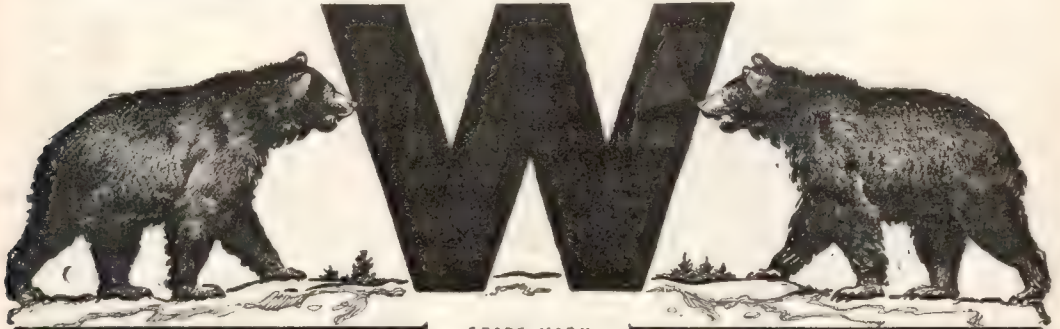
Pioneer Perfect Frames save all the hard work, and two-thirds the cost of a similar, complete boat. Remember, with Pioneer

Frames we furnish, absolutely free, patterns and instructions for completing your boat. Order Pioneer Frames **TODAY** on the Easy Payment plan and see for yourself the simplicity of the Pioneer System. If you haven't time, or cannot get material conveniently to complete your boat yourself, write us for low-priced, perfect Decking, Planking, Fittings, Engine, etc. Write **TODAY** for **FREE** Book of Pioneer Perfect Frames and Full-Size Patterns, etc., or send 25c for 100-page boat-builders' book, 300 illustrations. All about our 40 types of boats, engines, etc. Money back if not satisfied.

Pioneer Boat and Pattern Co., Wharf 239, Bay City, Mich.

WINCHESTER

LOOK FOR THE RED



TRADE MARK
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WHEN BUYING GUNS OR AMMUNITION

This Winchester trade-mark is the hall-mark of guns and ammunition as perfect as brains and experience, coupled with a complete plant, can make them. The red **W** is to guns, cartridges and shot-gun shells what the word "Sterling" is to silverware. **W W W**

For Your Protection "Look for the Red W"

WINCHESTER REPEATING ARMS CO.,

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

\$15

"Gem" ADDING MACHINE
FREE 10 DAY TRIAL AT OUR EXPENSE
Has an AUTOMATIC CARRIER and a RESETTING DEVICE that cleans the dial to zero. Does the work of high-priced machines. 2 years' WRITTEN GUARANTEE.
Special offer to agents
Address: S. W. ANCHER
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221 Broadway, N. Y.

IRON
Also ORNAMENTAL
WIRE FENCES

FENCES
Finest at lowest price. Guaranteed

Write for catalog

ENTERPRISE FOUNDRY & FENCE CO. 236 S. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, Ind.

Solid Color Silk Barathea

Woven on our own looms, fashioned in our own shops. The only neckwear in the world sold direct from **Weaver to Wearer**. None better at 50 and 75 cents. If the merit of

Shibboleth Neckwear

doesn't "stick out" all over it return the ties and we will cheerfully refund your money.

FOR THE SUMMER TIME.

Pennsylvania—Our new, narrow reversible four-in-hand, 49 in. long by 1½ in. wide, most suitable for the proper style Summer collar.

Columbia—Square end, club tie. A tie to be knotted into a bow. (Mention collar size.) Both styles in Black, White, Brown, Garnet, Purple, Navy. Choice of ties and colors to suit.

\$2.00 the half dozen postpaid.
Other shapes in Black and White.

Shibboleth Silk Co. 458 Broadway, N. Y.

Send money order, check or two cent stamps.
Write for catalogue "I."

DIAMONDS

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Send for our handsomely illustrated 1908 catalog containing 1500 beautiful reproductions of all that is correct and attractive in Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry. Then, in the privacy of your home or office, select whatever you desire. We send on Approval the goods you wish to see. If you like them, pay one fifth the price on delivery and the balance in eight equal monthly payments. We make your credit as good as the millionaire's and give you the advantage of the lowest possible prices. We make \$5 or \$10 do the work that \$50 does in a cash store, and give a written guarantee of value and quality. Catalog free. Write today.

Invest in a Diamond. It will pay better than stocks, bonds or savings bank interest, for Diamonds increase in value 10 to 20 per cent annually, and your security is absolute.

If considering a Diamond or Watch as a gift, you will find the Loftis System a great and timely convenience on anniversaries, birthdays, weddings, holidays, etc. Descriptive catalog is free. Write today. Do it now.

LOFTIS BROS. ESTD The Old Reliable. Original Dept. F63, 92 State St. & CO. 1858 Diamond and Watch Credit House Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.



STEVENS

RIFLES

Nothing like a good, reliable, straight-shooting Stevens Rifle to keep your boy out of doors this vacation and in touch with nature. He will be a better boy for it, and on the road to becoming a keen-eyed, quick-thinking, self-reliant man. With the gun, give him a copy of

Dan Beard's "Guns and Gunning"

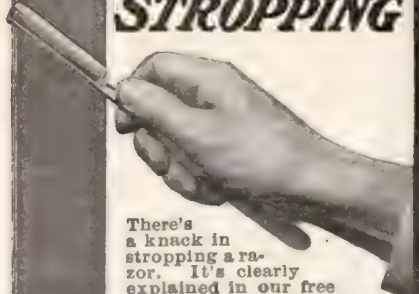
now ready. An interesting and valuable volume on camping, woodcraft, habits of game birds, which animals are pests and which are not, etc. Beautifully illustrated by Belmore H. Browne. Sent postpaid on receipt of price. Paper-covered edition, 20c.; cardboard-covered edition, 30c.

160-page Catalogue Free if you will send 5 cts. to cover postage. Filled with valuable information on choice and care of firearms; notes on sights, ammunition, etc.

If you cannot obtain Stevens Rifles, Shotguns or Pistols from your dealer, we ship direct, express prepaid, on receipt of catalogue price.

J. STEVENS ARMS & TOOL CO., 745 Front St., Chicopee Falls, Mass., U.S.A.

CORRECT STROPPING



There's a knack in stropping a razor. It's clearly explained in our free catalogue. It will pay you to send for it and learn about

Torrey Strops

and how to use them.

A Torrey Strop costs 50c. to \$2.50 and your money back if not satisfied. Sent, post paid, if not at dealers.

Torrey's **On-Edge Dressing** keeps any strop soft and pliable. 15c. or sent by mail upon receipt of price.

Torrey Razors are the finest razors made.

J. R. TORREY & CO.

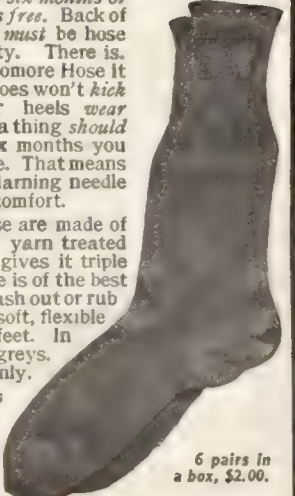
Dept. M. Worcester, Mass.

Darnomore Hose

No holes within six months or a new pair of socks free. Back of such a guarantee *must* be hose of unusual quality. There is. If you wear Darnomore Hose it means that your toes won't kick through or your heels wear through. If such a thing *should* happen within six months you get a new pair free. That means good-bye to the darning needle—farewell to discomfort.

Darnomore Hose are made of specially selected yarn treated in a manner that gives it triple strength. The dye is of the best quality—won't wash out or rub off. The socks are soft, flexible and easy to the feet. In blacks, tans and greys. Medium weight only.

Order at your dealer's or by mail. They come six pairs in a box, \$2.00, post-paid. Not sold in smaller lots. Guarantee in every box.



6 pairs in a box, \$2.00.

DOULL MILLER COMPANY, 81 Worth St., New York.



I Have Something More to Say to Women

**WILL YOU BE A PARTNER IN MY BUSINESS?
I WANT YOU TO JOIN MY BUSINESS.
WOULD YOU SPEND TEN CENTS ON YOUR FACE?**

I have built up a substantial fortune and helped over 3000 women associated with me to independence. My name is Mrs. J. C. Carr. I am the president of the Marietta Stanley Company, with factory and offices in Grand Rapids, Mich. I started my business with a \$5 bill. You do not need that amount to join me. I manufacture

SEMPRE GIOVINE (Always Young)

The most wonderful skin food and complexion beautifier ever produced. Over 3000 women who have used it became saleswomen and are sharing the profits of my business. I will supply you with samples;

MRS. J. C. CARR.

give them to your friends. The result will be so gratifying that a large demand will become established in your locality. I rely more on the merit of the sample than the efforts of my saleswomen to sell SEMPRE GIOVINE.

**THERE ARE MANY GOOD COMPLEXION BEAUTIFIERS. BEWARE
OF THOSE THAT PROMISE INSTANT RESULTS.
THEY WILL KILL YOUR SKIN.**

Your skin is composed of layers. The outside layer comes in contact with the air. It is called the cuticle. Nature has made it soft and clear. A glance at a child proves this. In the skin are millions of little cells through which it is nourished by Nature's elements—sunshine, pure air and water. They also throw off acids, dirt and foreign matter. Modern methods of treating these little cells or pores destroy the delicately tinted complexion that is your birthright as it is of the rose or peach blossom.

SEMPRE GIOVINE is a vegetable compound that feeds and stimulates these pores to natural healthy action. **For liberal sample send ten cents in stamps. Full size cake 50 cents.**

Write for sample. Cleanse the skin by ordinary methods, then apply SEMPRE GIOVINE, and in ten minutes the skin will be covered with moisture. A continual action goes on, taking in and throwing off, just as your lungs breathe. This absorbs SEMPRE GIOVINE, the skin being fed, cleansed and nourished. Your face will be cleaner, and continue to grow cleaner and more rosy.



PREVENTS AND REMOVES WRINKLES.

The cells become weakened or worn in grooves or lines caused by expression either of trouble or habit. **You cannot banish in a day what Father Time has taken years to accomplish.** SEMPRE GIOVINE will feed the cells in the worn places, and prevent wrinkles coming, and in due course remove all wrinkles.

If my representative calls at your home, be sure to get a sample. If there is no agent in your locality, send ten cents in stamps to cover postage. Then ask your dealer to keep you supplied or become my representative yourself. Three thousand women are supplying SEMPRE GIOVINE. They earn from \$250 to \$3000 according to the time given. One of my representatives is living in a beautiful home, built and paid for with her profits of selling SEMPRE GIOVINE. Write me personally.

MRS. J. C. CARR, PRESIDENT,

**MARIETTA STANLEY
COMPANY**

376 Fourth St., GRAND RAPIDS, MICH..

MARIETTA STANLEY CO., 376 Fourth St., Grand Rapids, Mich.
Enclosed find ten cents.
SEMPRE GIOVINE to
Name.....
Address.....
4 Argosy.

NEW INVENTION

NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT

Ohioan's New Method of Cleaning Clothes

Causing Great Excitement Where Exhibited
Unlike Anything You've Seen or Heard of

Cleans Family Wash in 30 to 50 Minutes

No Rubbing—No Chemicals—No Motors
No Washboard—No Wash Machine

Over 35,000 Already Sold—Ladies Delighted

SEE HOW SIMPLE, different, easy. Put on stove—add water, then soap, then clothes—that's all. In 5 to 8 minutes clothes clean. Laundries clean clothes without rubbing. EASY WAY does the same at your home. Dirt removed automatically except to move the knob occasionally.



The EASY WAY, in one operation, does the combined work of wash boiler, washboard and washing machine—less time, almost no labor—no injury to clothes.

The EASY WAY develops energy by mechanical manipulation, associated with hot water, soap suds, superheated steam, and scalding vapor, utilized as a compound force, all confined in a closed metal compartment. Special operating arrangements.

Cleans woollens, flannels, blankets or colored clothes, as well as white goods, finest laces, curtains, bed clothes. Saves time, fuel, labor, clothes, buttons, strength, looks, health and money.

No rubbing, wear, tear or injury. No soggy, bad-smelling, heavy wood—but all metal, strong, durable, sanitary, light in weight. Easily used, cleaned, handled—always ready. Child can use it—no experiment. No motors. Saves 52 days' drudgery yearly.

Thousands Praise It

J. McGee, Tenn., writes:—"One young lady cleaned day's washing by old method in one hour with Easy Way—another in 45 minutes." Mrs. T. Bullen, Can., writes:—"I washed bedding, heavy quilts, curtains, etc., without rubbing, and in a very short time." Laurette Mitchell, O., writes:—"Done a big washing in 45 minutes—sold 3 already." A. D. Poppleton, N. Y.:—"Gives perfect satisfaction—washed bed quilts, greasy overalls and fine clothes."

Price only \$6.00 complete—sent to any address. Not sold in stores. Send no money—only send your name and address. We're old firm; capital \$500,000.00. Everything proven. Guaranteed. Write today for 30 day trial offer, thousands testimonials, etc. Circulars Free.

FREE SAMPLE TO AGENTS!

Wanted Agents, Salesmen, Managers—men or women—at home or traveling, all or part time—showing—taking orders—appointing agents. "Easy Way" new, Nothing like it. World unsupplied—agents making big money. When operated, people stop—get excited—watch it. C. O. Garret, O., writes:—"Showed 7 families, sold 6. A. B. Verett, of La., sold 8 one day. J. T. Peay, of N. C., been out 2 days, sold 12. W. R. Stephenson, Tex., ordered 244 in 60 days."

Write today for special agents' plan, free sample, 1908 offer—act quick.

HARRISON MANUFACTURING COMPANY
630 Harrison Building - Cincinnati, O.

Are Your Sox Insured?

We insure "Holeproof" Sox for Six Months. Our Guarantee is—"If 'Holeproof' Sox come to holes or darns in six months, we will replace them with new socks FREE."

We were the very first concern to knit "guaranteed socks"—and our "Holeproof Sox" are the *only* socks that *outlast* the guarantee.

"Holeproof" Sox are sold only in boxes containing six pairs of a size—all one color or assorted colors. Sizes are 9½ to 12—colors are black, light and dark tan, pearl gray and navy blue.

Buy from your dealer or direct from us.
Ask for *genuine*—

Holeproof Sox

and, if your dealer does not have them, cut out this ad, pin to it a \$2.00 bill (or remit in any convenient way) for each six pairs of socks you desire; specify size and colors, and we will fill your order promptly.

We pay the transportation charges, so that "Holeproof" Sox cost you only \$2.00 for six pairs. And the guarantee is always the same.

"Holeproof" Sox *outwear* the six months' guarantee and, being whole at the end of six months, they are *then* as good, or better, than cheap socks which wear out in a few weeks.

Order today or write for our little book, "How to Make Your Feet Happy." Send no stamps. Just ask for the book.



Holeproof Hosiery Co., 117 Fourth Street, Milwaukee, Wis.

I AM HELPING OTHERS LET ME HELP YOU

If you are honest, ambitious and aggressive, I can help you **Make Money**—no matter where you live. I have made more than \$1,200.00 in one month in the **Real Estate** business. I made this in commissions selling property for others.

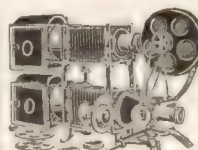
It doesn't matter whether you have had experience or not, or what your present occupation is. I can teach you the **Real Estate business** by mail, then I want you to act as my associate and assist me in your locality to sell property. Write me now.

I WILL TEACH YOU A CLEAN, HONORABLE, DIGIFIED BUSINESS.

My **Big Free Book** tells the story. Write for it. **ROBT DAWSON, 625 Garrison Ave., Fort Smith, Ark.**



IT PAYS BIG To Amuse The Public With Motion Pictures



NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY as our instruction Book and "Business Guide" tells all. We furnish Complete Outfit with Big Advertising Posters, etc. Humorous dramas brimful of fun, travel, history, religion, temperance work and songs illustrated. One man can do it.

Amazing Opportunity in any locality for a man with a little money to show in churches, school houses, lodge halls, theaters, etc. and to operate **Five Cent Theatres** in store rooms.

Motion Picture Films and Song Slides rented. Profits \$10 to over \$100 per night. Others do it. Why not you? It's easy: write to us, we'll tell you how. Catalog free.

AMUSEMENT SUPPLY CO., 462 Chemical Bank Bldg., CHICAGO.

YOU CAN EARN AS A TRAVELING SALESMAN

\$2,000 TO \$10,000 A YEAR

Hundreds of good positions open, you can easily secure one of them. No former experience required. If you are ambitious and want to earn more money write for our **FREE CATALOG**. "A Knight of the Grip" today. Address Dept. 27,

National Salesmen's Training Association
OFFICE: Merchants Block, Chicago, Ill. Lumber Exchange, Minneapolis, Minn. Seavirt Bldg., Kansas City, Mo. Write nearest office.



GORDON SUSPENDERS

THEY NEVER GROW LONGER

Gordons are the only suspenders guaranteed for one year.

OUR ONE YEAR GUARANTEE: *If ends break within one year we give new ends FREE. If other parts break within one year we give a new pair of Gordon Suspenders FREE.*

10 reasons why we can guarantee Gordon Suspenders for one year:

- 1—Buttonholes in the back ends are **not** cut in—they are **woven** in the webbing, which makes buttonholes that cannot tear.
- 2—Plenty of stretch in back ends for bending.
- 3—Ends double stitched & clasped—cannot separate.
- 4—The sliding back takes the place of rubber in the shoulder parts.
- 5—Substantial **no-rubber** webbing. Light in weight & the **strongest** suspender webbing.
- 6—Once fitted the buckles need never be raised. On elastic suspenders buckles need frequent raising.
- 7—Ends unhitch and connect quickly—unnecessary to unbutton them—grip is convenient, simple, strong.
- 8—Tubes through which the cable-yarn ends ride without hitch. Relieve all strain & allow free action.
- 9—White cable-yarn ends are the **strongest** of all suspender ends. **Proof—our one year guarantee.**
- 10—Pliable cable buttonholes which cannot tear. Buttonholes in leather do widen & tear.



Uncle Sam's soldiers wear Gordon Suspenders and like them immensely

The U. S. Army wears Gordon Suspenders because of their comfort and long wearing qualities. The Government demands strong and comfortable suspenders. Gordons are lightweight yet the strongest of all suspenders. There being no rubber in the shoulder parts—they never grow longer.

The Gordon sliding back takes the place of rubber, and leaves the shoulders free and easy.

Gordons wear much longer than any other kind—they're the only suspenders guaranteed for one year.

Most suspenders are too long or too short—Gordon Suspenders are made in sizes to fit short, medium and tall men.

4 SIZES: 33, 35, 37 and 40 inches. Size is on every pair. When ordering mention length from back suspender button over shoulder to front suspender button.

Gordons are now sold in a large number of cities. Being NEW they are not yet on sale everywhere. Any pains-taking retailer should gladly get Gordons for you. If he will not, buy of us by mail. 50 CENTS A PAIR, POST-PAID. After one week's wear if you don't like them send them back, and we will return your money. Please try your home stores first.

Gordon Suspenders are made in plain Black, White and Plain Colors, also in Stripes.

GORDON MFG. CO., 291 MAIN ST., NEW ROCHELLE, N. Y.

DIAMONDS

CHARGE ON ACCOUNT

DIAMOND BARGAINS
To You at Cash Prices

64—Engraved Diamond Ring	\$65.00
65—Tiffany Relcher Dia. Ring	25.00
66—Engraved " "	40.00
67—Tiffany Diamond Kar Screws	55.00
68—Relcher " "	42.50
69—Tiffany Diamond Ring	45.00
70—Tooth " "	60.00
71—Flat Relcher Diamond Ring	75.00

Just write us which one of these beautiful, sparkling, Pure White Gems you would like to see. No deposit required—we'll send it at once. If it isn't the finest and snappiest Diamond you ever saw, send it back at our expense. If it pleases, pay one-fifth down, balance monthly to suit your convenience. Diamonds pay good interest and show prosperity. What a beautiful present for your loved one, whether she be sweetheart, wife, mother, sister or daughter, one would make. Or wear one yourself—you can afford to on our terms. Order today or write for Free Catalog of Diamonds and Watches.

THE WALKER-EDMUND CO. DIAMOND IMPORTERS
N 99 State Street, Chicago

A Glorious 4th
but a safe one

Let it be as noisy as
you please for
yourself or
boy—but
a safe
one.

H & R REVOLVERS

There is plenty of fun in store for all with a supply of "blanks" and a safe, dependable H & R Revolver. Cheap firearms are dear at any price—and dangerous. An H & R is guaranteed—perfect in its mechanical construction, and tested before you ever see it—safe, sure and simple.

Model 1906 only weighs 10 ounces; while small in size it is a good noise maker as well as a reliable weapon, will last a lifetime, 22 caliber, seven shot, rim fire, double action, 2½ inch barrel, nickel finish. Price, \$3.00.

Sold by all first-class dealers. Rather than accept a substitute order from us direct. Look for our name on barrel and little target trade-mark on the handle. Send for Illustrated Catalog.

HARRINGTON & RICHARDSON ARMS CO.,

419 PARK AVENUE, WORCESTER, MASS.



The famous Turco-American GLASS PIPE

At last the perfect Pipe—the pipe that it is a delight to smoke—that never bites, and that is Free from the rank odors which women so detest about the house.

The man who says he cannot smoke a pipe CAN smoke this one—and with the keenest pleasure that tobacco ever gave.

It is made of specially annealed glass—Unbreakable, Non-Absorbent and readily Cleanable, with an inner vented-bowl of ingenious construction, allowing every grain of the tobacco to be burned to a dry ash—and drawing the nicotine away from mouth contact. That does away with the nasty little heel of nicotine—soaked residue with its bad odor and tongue biting taste. It is the only pipe in the world that remains cool throughout—whose last whiff is as sweet as the first.

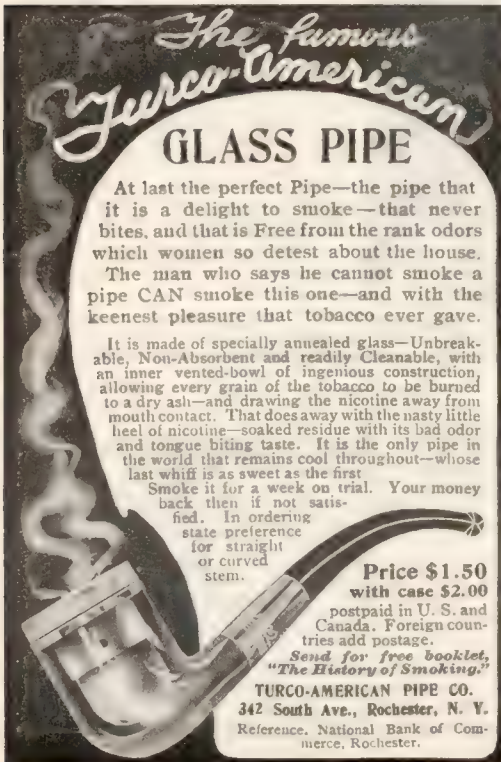
Smoke it for a week on trial. Your money back then if not satisfied. In ordering state preference for straight or curved stem.

**Price \$1.50
with case \$2.00**

postpaid in U. S. and Canada. Foreign countries add postage.

Send for free booklet, "The History of Smoking."

TURCO-AMERICAN PIPE CO.
342 South Ave., Rochester, N. Y.
Reference, National Bank of Commerce, Rochester.



NEW-SKIN TRADE MARK REGISTERED



LIQUID COURT PLASTER

Immediately dries, forming a tough, transparent, waterproof coating. "New-Skin" heals Cuts, Abrasions, Hang-Nails, Chapped and Split Lips or Fingers, Burns, Blisters, etc. Instantly relieves Chilblains, Frosted Ears, Stings of Insects, Chafed or Blistered Feet, Callous Spots, etc., etc.

A coating on the sensitive parts will protect the feet from being chafed or blistered by new or heavy shoes. MECHANICS, SPORTSMEN, BICYCLISTS, GOLFERS, in fact all of us, are liable to bruise, scratch or scrape our skin. "NEW-SKIN" will heal these injuries, will not wash off, and after it is applied the injury is forgotten as "NEW-SKIN" makes a temporary new skin until the broken skin is healed under it. "Paint it with "New-Skin" and forget it" is literally true.

CAUTION: WE GUARANTEE our claims for "NEW-SKIN". No one guarantees substitutes or imitations trading on our reputation, and the guarantee of an imitator would be worthless any way.

ALWAYS INSIST ON GETTING "NEW-SKIN". Sample size, 10c. Family size (like illustration), 25c. Two ounce bottle (for surgeons and hospitals), 50c.

AT THE DRUGGISTS, or we will mail a package anywhere in the United States on receipt of price.

Douglas Mfg. Co. 64-66 POPLAR STREET
Dept. 11, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Brighton

FLAT CLASP GARTERS

for
KNEE or FULL LENGTH DRAWERS.



embody every latter-day improvement in garter design and some important patented features peculiar to the "BRIGHTON" alone.

EASY TO ADJUST—Simplest in construction of all garters. On in a twinkling—off in a trice!

"COMFY" TO WEAR—Doesn't ride up and down the leg, but "stays put."

KEEPS YOUR SOCKS TRIM—The patented flat swivel clasp and support prevent wrinkling of the sock with low shoes.

HOLDS FAST—The grip is only detachable with your fingers.

"BRIGHTON" FLAT CLASP GARTERS

are made of pure silk web in all standard colors, also in fancy striped and figured effects.

Price 25 Cents a Pair

at your dealer's, or sent by mail on receipt of price.

PIONEER SUSPENDER CO. 718 Market St., Dept. "A," PHILADELPHIA

Makers of "BRIGHTON" ELASTIC and LEATHER GARTERS, and "PIONEER" SUSPENDERS



In Cash \$50,000 In Stock
Of The
Miami Cycle & Mfg. Co.,

which earned 10% during the season of 1907, is offered as proof that

The



World's

Best

Bicycle

has less pressure on its crank hanger bearings than any ordinary bicycle built; therefore, that it pushes easier and runs faster with less energy and will climb hills easier. The explanation is found in the special Crank Hanger construction and large Sprockets of the Racycle. 1908 Models are built with drop forged steel heads, crown and seat post clusters and the frames are made of English cold drawn weldless steel tubing made especially for us. We build Racycles as near non-breakable as money, materials and workmanship will permit.

Write for 1908 catalog and pamphlet—"The Three Reasons", which contains our offer. We make no cheap RACYCLES but you can secure yours cheap if you secure us an agent.

The Miami Cycle & Mfg. Co. Middletown, O., U.S.A.

Three 1c Stamps

Will bring to your home a tube of the best dentifrice ever formulated. Don't use an inferior grade when you can get the best for practically the same price. If you simply ask for a "good dentifrice," the ambitious clerk is apt to give you a brand on which the *profit is largest*. Insist upon getting



Dr. Sheffield's (Antiseptic) Crème Dentifrice

—the original tooth paste—prescribed by Dentists the world over and used by discriminating buyers since 1850. Every ingredient is absolutely pure and of best quality. Dr. Sheffield's Tooth Powder possesses equal merit.

Sold wherever Toilet Requisites are found

When not immediately obtainable send three one-cent stamps for sample tube (1-6 size), or 25c. for full size, to

**SHEFFIELD DENTIFRICE CO., 105 Broad Street
NEW LONDON, CONN.**

Delivery guaranteed.

Save the coupons on carton.

They have a cash value.

President Suspenders

Two Factors Are Necessary to the Perfect Suspender -- Comfort and Wear -- and Neither Must be Sacrificed for the Other.

In non-elastic suspenders, comfort is sacrificed. In the ordinary elastics, wear is sacrificed.

Frictionless "give and take" action combined with highest quality of elastic webbing insures perfect comfort and longest wear in President Suspenders. That's

100% Value

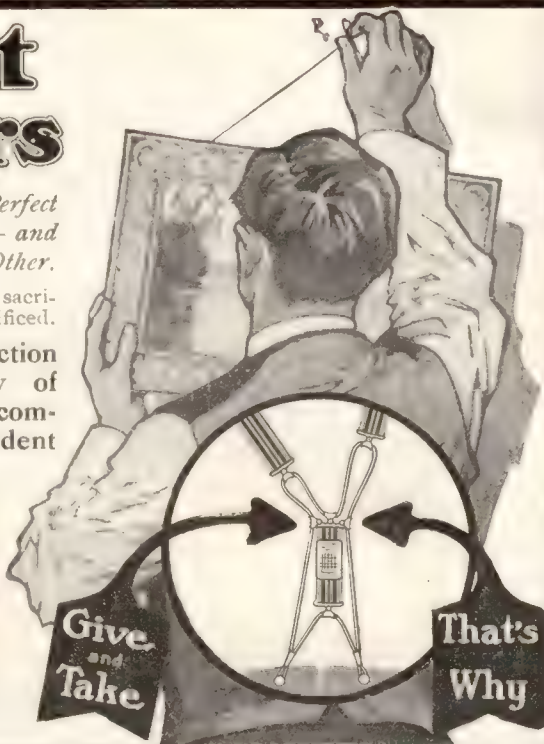
Begin today to get your full allowance of suspender comfort—buy President Suspenders now. Various weights and lengths.

Guarantee ticket on every pair. "Satisfaction—New Pair—or Money Back."

If your dealer can't supply you, we will, postpaid on receipt of price, 50 cents.

THE C. A. EDGARTON MFG. CO.

708 Main St., SHIRLEY, MASS.




Needdraw

BOSTON GARTER

DESIGNED TO BE WORN WITH KNEE DRAWERS

NON-ELASTIC TUBULAR KNIT LEG BAND

ELASTIC ADJUSTABLE PENDANT

NO METAL TOUCHES THE LEG

Made with the Celebrated

Velvet Grip

CUSHION RUBBER BUTTON CLASP

Of your Haberdasher or sample pair on receipt of 25c.

GEO. FROST CO.
Sole Makers, Boston

GOOD ALL THE YEAR ROUND

Dioxogen

OXYGEN MAKES THE BUBBLES

YOU CAN SEE IT WORK

THE BUBBLING CLEANSER

MOUTH THROAT

Dioxogen bubbles as it cleanses infectious, harmful substances from mouth, teeth and throat.

It is a thorough scientific antiseptic cleanser of all tissues. Sold everywhere.

Book M—"Health Cleanliness for School Children"—very interesting and valuable, MAILED **FREE**

THE OAKLAND CHEMICAL CO., NEW YORK



The New No. 3 Bulls-Eye Kodak

Pictures $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$.

Price, \$8.00.

There was never a camera that gave more uniformly satisfactory results in the hands of the amateur than the No. 2 Bulls-Eye Kodak. Its simplicity and accuracy did away with most of the opportunities for making mistakes. The No. 3 Bulls-Eye is simply a little larger model of the same camera, making pictures of a more desirable shape and size. *Anybody can make good pictures with a Bulls-Eye Kodak.*

The No. 3 Bulls-Eye Kodak has the Eastman Rotary Shutter that is always set, meniscus achromatic lens, three stops, two finders, two tripod sockets, and loads in daylight with Kodak Cartridges for two, four, six or twelve exposures. Pictures $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Price, \$8.00.

Catalog of Kodaks free at any dealers or by mail.

EASTMAN KODAK CO., Rochester, N. Y., *The Kodak City.*

BURNS BARRELS OF AIR

NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT

The Most Wonderful Stove Ever Invented

Consumes 395 Barrels of Air to
One Gallon Common Kerosene Oil

Causing Great Excitement Wherever Exhibited

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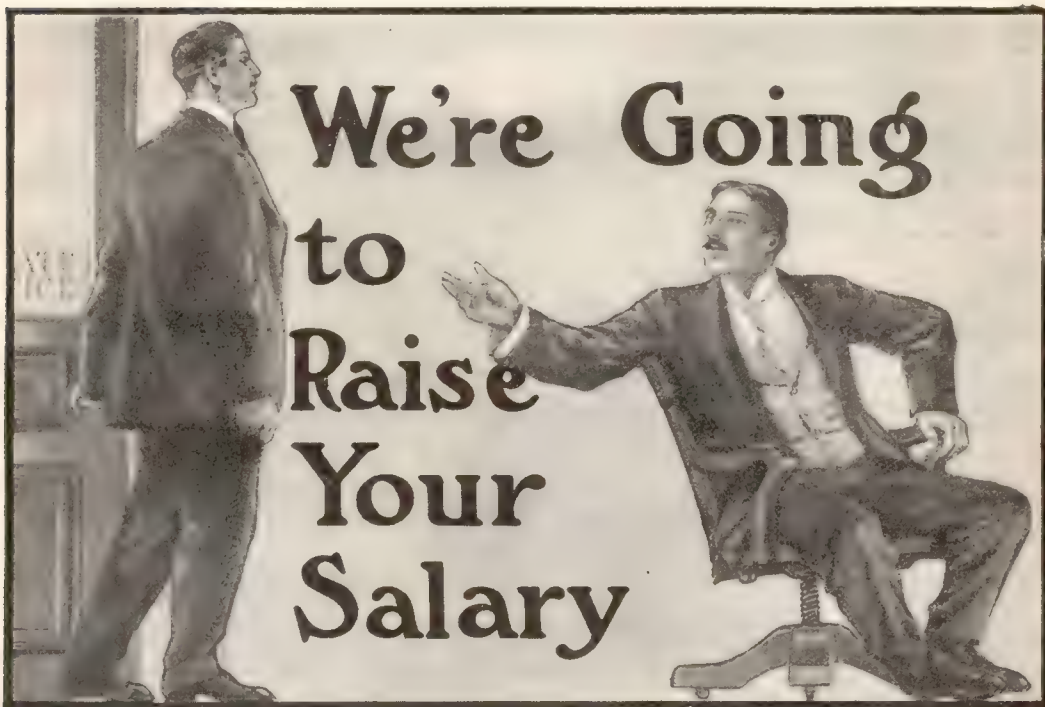
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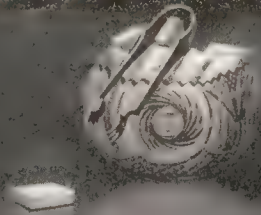
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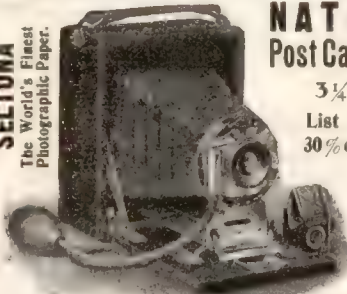
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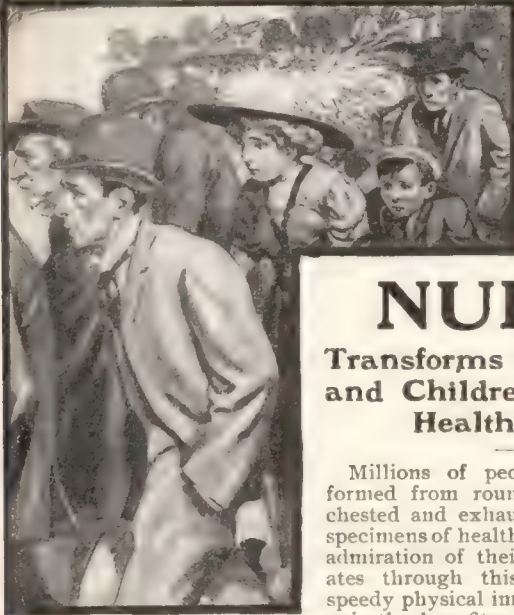
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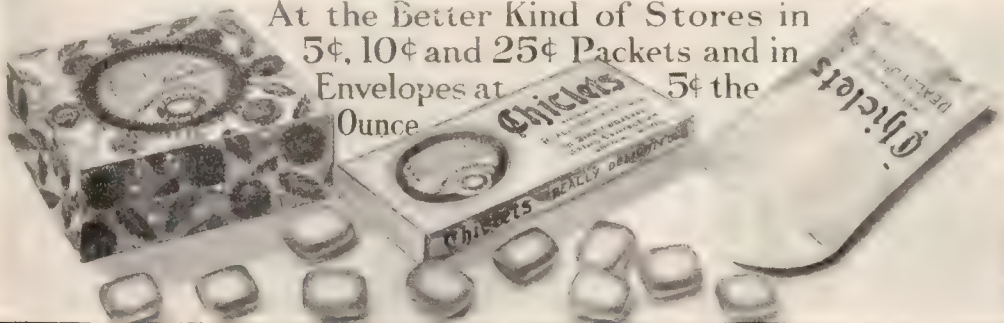
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Insurance Company of America

Incorporated as a Stock Company by the State of New Jersey

JOHN F. DRYDEN, Prest.

Dept. 98.

HOME OFFICE: Newark, N. J.



Handy size
and exact
style of
wrapping.
Look for
trade mark
face on
each box.



Photo of
dollar outfit
when
opened.
Count the
12 blades.
Avoid bad
imitations.



'Ever-Ready' 12 Bladed Safety Razor



**EXTRA
Ever-Ready
BLADES**
10 for 50¢

The Ever-Ready Safety Razor will *shave you best* of all safety razors. *This is a guarantee.* The best test of the *Ever-Ready* is its use and the best proof of its value is its preference over \$5.00 makes by men who have tried both. The *Ever-Ready* blade is the *Ever-Ready* razor's overwhelming success. No other razor blade is as capable of as good a shave. There are 12 of these intensely sharp "*Ever-Ready*" blades in each dollar set, together with handsomely nickeled safety frame, handle and blade stopper all in a fine case.

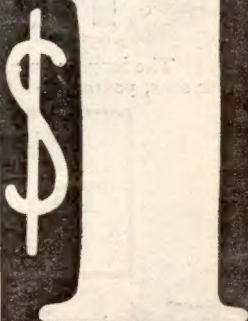
Extra "*Ever-Ready*" Blades 10 for 50 cents

—or else you can strop back the keen edge or exchange 10 dull blades for 10 new ones upon payment of 35 cents.

Sold by Hardware, Cutlery, Department Stores, Jewelers, and Druggists throughout America and the World. Ask any local dealer.

Mail orders prepaid upon receipt of \$1.00

AMERICAN SAFETY RAZOR CO., Inc., 320 Broadway, New York
Canadian Agents, International Distributing Co., 501 St. Catherine St., Montreal, Canada



**Guaranteed
BEST with
BEST of
Guarantees**



When Johnny comes
Marching home again
With a common
Imitation-

Send Johnny a
Marching back again
With a note of
Explanation-



Never send me
anything but
Kellogg's - the
Genuine
Toasted
Corn
Flakes

Look for this
Signature

W. K. Kellogg



Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen



SAFETY PEN

SEALED WHEN CLOSED

SEALED WHEN OPEN

For Vacation Travels or Home Use

Sealed ink-tight to carry in any position
in purse, trunk, traveling-bag or pocket

Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen

Safety Pen

bearing the well-known guarantee that the name implies, fulfils every writing requirement, and may be carried anywhere and everywhere, in any position, upside down, right side up, sideways, or endways. Toss it into the trunk or traveling-bag to travel with you as you desire. The ink can't spill, the parts won't break and the pen won't clog.

Time and memory are two of our most precious and most fleeting possessions
Don't waste one and strain the other

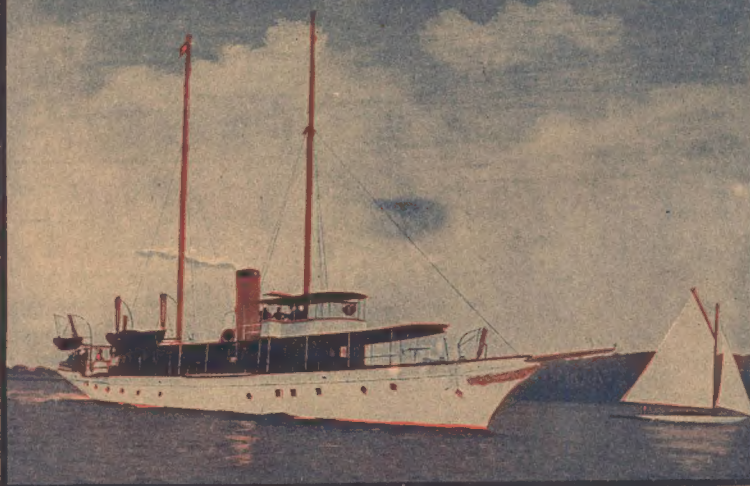
Purchase one of these pens today, for it will serve you for a whole lifetime. Fitted with the Spoon-Feed and embodying all the other well-known Waterman's Ideal qualities, in addition to being so made that in a most convenient manner the cap screws the pen nib back, when not in use, to securely seal the barrel.

**Ask your dealer to show you
Waterman's Ideal Safety Fountain Pen**

ACTUAL
VEST
POCKET
SIZE

PLAIN
BLACK
CHASED OR
CARDINAL

№12 V.S. 3⁰⁰
" 14 V.S. 4⁰⁰
" 15 V.S. 5⁰⁰



ACTUAL
LADIES
SIZE

GOLD
MOUNTED
2 BANDS
OR 1 MID-
DLE BAND

№12 V.S.G.M. 4⁰⁰
" 14 V.S.G.M. 5⁰⁰
" 15 V.S.G.M. 6⁰⁰

Waterman Co., 173 Broadway N.Y.

8 SCHOOL ST. BOSTON 209 STATE ST. CHICAGO 186 ST. JAMES ST. MONTREAL
742 MARKET ST. SAN FRANCISCO 12 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.